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THE  
Preacher's Complete Homiletical  
COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
OLD TESTAMENT

*(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN)*

With Critical and Explanatory, Notes, Indices, etc., etc.

BY  
VARIOUS AUTHORS

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LONDON :  
RICHARD D. DICKINSON, FARRINGDON STREET  
1887.

# HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE BOOK OF

# DEUTERONOMY.

*WITH CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES. INDICES, Etc., Etc.*

BY

REV. JAMES WOLFENDALE.

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# HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON

## DEUTERONOMY.

### INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON THE BOOK.

**I. The Name.** The Books of the Pentateuch are called by their first word, *e.g.*, Genesis בְּרֵשִׁית B'rēshīth = "In beginning;" Exodus וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת V'el'leh Sh'mōth = "And these the names." So Deuteronomy has been called אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים Ēl'leh Hādd'bhārim = "These the words." The Rabbins, however, sometimes named the Book סֵפֶר תּוֹכַחֹת Sēphēr Thōchākhoth = "Book of Rebukes." But by the Jewish people it was frequently called מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה Mishneh Hättōrah = recapitulation or repetition of the law, from Deut. xvii. 18, which name was adopted by the LXX. who christened the Book Δευτερονόμιον, and the Vulgate, following, Deuteronomium; English, Deuteronomy.

**II. Author.** "One of the first questions connected with the Pentateuch" (and of course Deuteronomy) "is that of authorship" (*Davidson*). "Moses was the originally received author of the Book of Deuteronomy. In early times no one, Jew, Christian, or heathen, denied the Mosaic authorship till Aben Ezra, in the twelfth century, raised some doubts" (*Patrick*). "In the seventeenth century Richard Simon, in his 'Critical History of the Old Testament,' denied that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch" (*Kitto's Dict.*, s. v. *Simon*). "Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the authorship of the Pentateuch has given rise to much discussion" (*Horne's Introduction*). But the whole controversy may be summarised under two heads: (*a.*) The Supplementary (*Horne*) or Fragmentary Hypothesis (*Hävernick*); and (*b.*) The Mosaic authorship. In our limited space we refrain from adding one word to the controversy, but would rather refer the reader to two or three works where the question is stated and literature on the subject is given, *e.g.*, Articles "Pentateuch," "Deuteronomy," in *Kitto's Cyc. Bib. Lit.* and *Smith's Dictionary*; *Horne's Introduction*, vol. ii. 593; *Davidson's Introduction to Old Testament*, vol. i.; *Keil and Delitzsch on Pentateuch*, vol. i. 17-28; *Hengstenberg's Egypt and Books of Moses*; *Hävernick's Introduction to Old Testament*; *Colenso's Pentateuch*; *Speaker's Commentary*. We would, however, quote a word from two writers on this matter before leaving it: "If the Pentateuch is not the work of him who names himself in it as its author, it is the work of *deception*. The history is then an untrue history: the laws are falsely ascribed to Moses: the predictions have been invented *post eventum*" (*Hävernick*). "The genius and dispo-

sition, in other words, *the character* of the author; the *contents* of the Books themselves, or what they treat of in relation to historical, political, and geographical topics; *the nature of the style and language*, and the arrangement and form of these Books, all show Moses to be the author" (*Jahn*).

**III. Contents.** The Book is divided into two parts: the first, from chap. i. to xxx. ; the second, from chap. xxxi. to xxxiv.

I. Consists of three addresses which Moses delivered to all the people according to the head of chap. i. vers. 1-4.

(a.) i. 6-iv. 40. First address, to prepare the way for exposition and enforcement of the law.

(b.) v.-xxvi. Second address, is the law itself, which Moses set before the people, and consists of two parts—

(1.) v.-xi. General.

(2.) xii.-xxvi. Special.

(c.) xxvii.-xxx. Third address, has reference to the renewal of the covenant.

II. The second part of the Book contains the close of Moses' life and labours.

(a.) Appointment of Joshua to be the leader of Israel into Canaan (xxxi.)

(b.) Song of Moses (xxxii. 1-47).

(c.) Announcement of Moses' death (xxxii. 40-52).

(d.) Blessing of Moses (xxxiii.)

(e.) Account of Moses' death (xxxiv.)

*Vide* Keil and Delitzsch, Angus' Handbook to Bible, Davidson's Introduction, Smith's Dictionary, Speaker's Commentary, and Kitto's Cyc. Bib. Lit.

**IV. Date.** If the Mosaic authorship be accepted, then the date of the Book is easily fixed, and may be determined by chap. i. 3, which implies that the Book was composed during the last two months of the life of Moses. (*Cf.* Keil and Delitzsch, Horne, Hävernick, Speaker's Commentary.) On the other hand, if the Mosaic authorship be rejected, then the date is fixed variously by different critics, *e.g.*, De Wette, time of Solomon; Ewald, of Manasseh; and so on, and so on, *quot homines tot sententiae*. But see the authorities already named, with the addition of Jahn, from whom a word: "The language of the Pentateuch is very ancient Hebrew, and differs considerably from the Psalms and other more modern books. There are no foreign words to be found in the Pentateuch, except some of old Egyptian origin. Archaisms occur, and forms less frequent in the modern books."

**V. Purpose of the Book.** Exodus depicts the inauguration of the kingdom of God on Sinai. Leviticus and Numbers, the former narrates the *spiritual*, the latter the *political* organisation of the kingdom, by facts and legal precepts. Deuteronomy recapitulates the whole in a hortatory strain, embracing both history and legislation, and impresses it upon the hearts of the people, for the purpose of arousing true fidelity to the covenant, and securing its lasting duration. The economy of the old covenant having been thus established, the revelation of the law closes with the death of its Mediator (*Keil and Delitzsch*).

**VI. Relation of Deuteronomy to the other Books of the Pentateuch.** It is not quite accurate to speak of Deuteronomy as *merely* a recapitulation of things commanded and done in the preceding books, nor yet as a compendium and summary of the law. Large portions of the Mosaic code are omitted. Still less is it a manual for the ignorant. . . . Deuteronomy is an authoritative and inspired commentary on the law, serving in some respects also as a supplement and codicil to it. The preceding books displayed Moses principally in the capacity of the legislator or annalist. Deuteronomy sets him before us in the light of the prophet (*cf.* Speaker's Commentary, Keil and Delitzsch).



**VII. Genuineness.** "A very strong proof of the genuineness of the Book lies in its relation to the later writings of the prophets. Of all the books of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy has been made most use of by the prophets, simply because it is best calculated to serve as a model for prophetic declarations, as also because of the inward harmony that exists between the prophecies and the law upon which they are built" (*Hüvernick*).

**VIII. Style.** "The speeches exhibit a unity of style and character which is strikingly consistent with such circumstances. They are pervaded by the same vein of thought, the same tone and tenor of feeling, the same peculiarities of conception and expression. They exhibit matter which is neither documentary nor traditional, but conveyed in the speaker's own words. Their aim is strictly hortatory; their style earnest, heart-stirring, impressive, in passages sublime, but throughout rhetorical" (*Speaker's Commentary*). "The style throughout is changed" (from that of the other books of the Pentateuch). "The manner of representation is somewhat rhetorical, verbose, and not unlike the prophetic. The tone is no longer that of the narrator or a lawgiver, but that of a moral preacher who expatiates in long exhortations. Moreover, the style has some peculiar turns, which appear not in the other books, but in the prophets, especially Jeremiah" (*Schumann*). "In Deuteronomy the speaker is evidently an old man, whose age has rendered him somewhat verbose, captious, and querulous, and disposed to censure the errors of his juniors" (*Jahn*).

**IX. Deuteronomy in the Synagogue.** The Jews divided the Pentateuch into fifty-four parts. The division into fifty-four sections was to provide a lesson for each Sabbath, from the Pentateuch, of those years which, according to Jewish chronology, have fifty-four Sabbaths. In those years which have only fifty-two Sabbaths, four shorter sections are read on two Sabbaths. The first section, Genesis i.-vi. 8, is read on the first Sabbath after the Feast of Tabernacles. Deuteronomy embraces sections 44 to 54. For a full account see Dr. Ginsburg's article "Haphtara," in Kittó's "Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature."

**X. Estimates of Deuteronomy.** "The Book is superior to all the other books of the Pentateuch, for it is the summing up. . . . Its contents are a Divine revelation in words and deed, or, rather, the fundamental revelation through which Jehovah selected Israel to be His people, and gave to them their rule of life (*νόμος*) or theocratical constitution as a people and kingdom" (*Keil and Delitzsch*). "Moses delivered this address to Israel a short time before his death. . . . The address of Moses is in perfect harmony with his situation. He speaks like a dying father to his children. The words are earnest, inspired, impressive. He looks back over the whole forty years of their wanderings, reminds of blessings received, ingratitude returned, God's judgments and His love, explains laws, adds what is necessary, &c." (*Hengstenberg*). "The Book of Deuteronomy contains, not so much a recapitulation of the things commanded and done, as related in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, as a compendium and summary of the whole law and wisdom of the people of Israel, wherein those things which related to the priests are omitted, and only such things included as the people generally required to know" (*Luther*). "With respect to the prophetic parts of Deuteronomy, it should be remarked that Messiah is here more explicitly foretold than in the preceding books, and described as the completion of the Jewish economy. The prophecies of Moses increase in number and clearness toward the end of his writings. As he approached the end of his life he appears to have discerned futurity with more exactness" (*Clapham*).



# CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—I. Biographical. *Sihon*. סִיחֹן (Sikhōn). LXX. Σηών.

Joseph. Σιχών. King of the Amorites when the Israelites reached the borders of Canaan,—a man of courage and audacity. Shortly before the appearance of Israel, he had dispossessed Moab of a splendid territory. He did not temporise, like Balak, but fought at once. . . . *Og*. אוֹג. The Amoritish king of Bashan, who ruled sixty cities (cf. Josh. xiii. 12). One of the last of the Rephaim. According to tradition, he escaped from the flood by wading beside the Ark (*Sale's Koran*, Note, chap. v.) He was supposed to be the largest of the sons of Anak, and descended from Ad : said to have lived 3000 years, and refused the warning of Jethro, sent to him and his people as a prophet. . . . *Caleb*. כָּלֵב (Cālēbh). LXX. Χάλεβ. Son of Jephunneh, a Kenezite (cf. Numb. xxxii. 12; Josh. xiv. 6, 14). He was a ruler or prince, and a head in the tribe of Judah. Apparently he was brave, conscientious, outspoken. . . . *Jephunneh*. יִפְחִנֵּחַ. LXX. Ἰεφοννή. Father of Caleb, probably of an Edomite tribe, called Kenezites, from Kenaz, their founder, who was a son of Eliphaz, the son of Esau (cf. Gen. xxxvi. 15, 42; 1 Chron. i. 53; Josh. xiv. 14). . . . *Joshua*. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ Y'hoshua. LXX.

Ἰησοῦς = whose help is in Jehovah (*Gesenius*) : God the Saviour (*Pearson*). Son of Nun, tribe of Ephraim (1 Chron. vii. 27). Born about the time Moses fled to Midian. The future captain was at first a slave. Mentioned first in the fight against Amalek at Rephidim, where he led Israel. When Moses ascended Sinai, Joshua accompanied him. He was one of the twelve chiefs sent to spy out the land. He evidently was one of the natural leaders of Israel, and therefore a man of character, force, and energy. . . . Nun. נֹחַ. Nun. In Syriac and Arabic = a fish. LXX. Νεψή. Nothing is known of him.

II. Historical Allusions and Contemporary History. “*Amorite*.” אֲמֹרִי Emōrī. The dwellers on the summits—mountaineers; one of the chief nations who possessed the land of Canaan before its conquest by the Israelites. As “Highlanders” they contrast with the “Canaanites,” who were “Lowlanders.” As children of the hills they were a bold, hardy race. From the days of Abram to the time of Joshua this people fully maintained their character of the “warrior.” After the conquest of Canaan, nothing is heard of them in the Bible, except in the usual formula where the early inhabitants are occasionally referred to. . . . *Anakim*. עֲנָקִים Anākīm. A race of giants, so called either from their stature or strength. They were descendants of Arba, and dwelt in the southern part of Canaan. The race appears to have been divided into three families. Their chief city was Hebron. . . . Of contemporary history it is impossible to speak definitely,—it is one vast chaos, where the mind is lost in the wild confusion of conflicting theories. In our limited space we dare not venture on more than, Egypt was; Assyria was possibly throwing out the rootlets of the future tree of her empire; Greece was the habitation of scattered tribes; Phœnicia probably was sending forth her fleets to plough the ocean; but so uncertain are the records, silence is esteemed better than what might be shown a baseless theory.

III. Natural History. Ver. 1. *Red Sea*. Heb. Suph, lit. “reeds,” seaweed, sedge, river-grass, rushes : specially of the thick and strong rushes on the banks of the Nile, and of the sedges of the Red Sea, from which this latter receives its name of Yam Suph. The word in this verse gives name to some place in the district of the wanderings. Ver. 25. “*Fruit of the land*.” “The Hebrews had three generic terms, designating three great classes of the fruits of the land, closely corresponding to what may be expressed in English as (1.) Corn-fruit or field produce; (2.) Vintage fruit; (3.) Orchard fruit. The principal fruits are grapes, olives, figs; those less common are pomegranate, apricot, walnut, almond, apple, quince, mulberry, date, orange, lemon, citron, banana, and prickly pear. Ver. 44. “As bees do.” Of bees in general we say nothing, for there are so many handbooks on these busy little creatures. For the force of the reference, see quotation from “Park’s Travels.”

IV. Manners and Customs. The tone of the chapter, apart from such direct references as the dwelling in tents, and moving from place to place, indicates a primitive people. Moses is the father to them : they each bring their little troubles to him—“he carries” as a father his child—his words are authoritative. Ver. 11. A complimentary wish. In early stages of society, when life is simple, large families are a blessing. It is only in highly organised and artificial forms of life that families become an extravagance. Ver. 13. The people lived in families and tribes. Kinship, rather than geographical bounds, made divisions for the nation. The tribal relations were long kept up. Ver. 23. “*Walled cities*.” Warfare was of a personal kind, the chief weapons being those by which a man could inflict injury on a man. With the exception of the battering ram, the ancients had few means of assaulting fortifications. A wall, though useless now, was of the utmost importance then. For the same reason, the “great” and “tall” men were a terror to their foes. A giant was a “somebody” in those days. Ver. 39. “Little ones . . . a prey.” The conquerors took captive the living. The men who survived were generally put to death, sometimes the women too; but the latter, for

the most part, with the children, were made into slaves. This fact exemplifies the statement in note on ver. 11; children were valuable. Ver. 27. "Murmured in your tents." As a roving and pastoral people they had no fixed habitation. Houses were unknown. Their temple was only a fabric of skins and linen cloth and rope—a Tabernacle.

V. Chronology. The chronology of this Book, like that in all the post-Exodus, dates from the escape from Egypt, when the people entered on their real life of freedom (cf. Exod. xii. 1, 2); the date in ver. 3 is, therefore, the eleventh month of the fortieth year from their leaving Egypt.

VI. Literary Criticism. "On *this* side Jordan," render, *beyond* Jordan. The Hebrew word = "this side," "other side" (cf. Gesenius). "The phrase *b'eber* hay-yarden, means literally, 'at the side or passage of Jordan'" (*Speaker's Commentary*). "In the plain" **בְּעֶרְבָה** Bā-ā-rā-bāh. Gesenius connects the word with one which means "burnt up," "waste," therefore "sterile" = desert. But besides this general meaning there is a special significance, according to Gesenius, which the writer in "Smith's Dictionary" accepts, when the word is used with the article as in the present instance: the word then is a proper name, and was applied to the country between the Dead Sea and the Elenitic Gulph (cf. Geographical Notes). "Red Sea," render, "over against Suph" (*Speaker's Commentary*). "Flags" (*Benisch*). "It is impossible that our translators can here be correct in rendering *Suph*, the Red Sea: (a) because *that* is invariably called 'Yam Suph' = sea of Suph; and (b) because Moses and the people were at this time on the eastern side of Jordan (ver. 5), and, consequently, far enough from the Red Sea" (*Carpenter*). "Dizahab." **דִּי זָהָב** Dī Zābāb. The word should be separated as it is in Hebrew. As *zahab* means gold, the LXX. rendered it *καταχρύσεα*, and the Vulgate *ubi auri est plurimum*. It is probably the name of a place. Ver. 2. For position of the verse cf. *infra*. Ver. 5. Moses speaks in the third person of himself. This need be no difficulty. It was frequently done by ancient writers, both religious and profane: cf. John's "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and Cæsar's *Commentary*, the writer always speaks of himself in the third person. . . . "Began," better, "undertook." Ver. 6. "Dwelt long enough," "sitten much" (*Ainsworth*). Ver. 7. "Nigh thereunto," Hebrew, "his neighbours." Ver. 8. "Set," Hebrew, "given" (*Benisch*). Ver. 13. "Take," Hebrew, "give," "put," (*Benisch*). Ver. 15. "Made," Hebrew, "gave" (*Speaker's Commentary*). Ver. 17. "Respect persons," Hebrew, "acknowledge faces," "recognise a face" (*Benisch*, cf. Gesenius). Ver. 22. "Search," Hebrew, "dig." They were to uncover what was concealed. Ver. 23. "The thing pleased me well, Hebrew, "was good in my eyes." Ver. 25. "Brought," "restored" (*Benisch*). Ver. 26. "Commandment," Hebrew, "mouth." According to a common figure of speech in Hebrew, the instrument is used for the thing accomplished by that instrument. Ver. 28. "Discouraged," Hebrew, "melt." Ver. 27. "Murmured," Hebrew, "vituperated" (*Benisch*). Ver. 41. "Weapons of war," or *armour*. . . . "Ye were ready to go up." Rather, perhaps, "ye made light of going up;" i.e., "ye were ready to attempt it as a trifling undertaking." For further comments on this much-discussed verse, vide *Speaker's Commentary*. Ver. 44. "*In Seir*," "from" *Seir* (*Clapham*). "As bees do," the same comparison in *Iliad* xvi. 259, &c.

VII. Geographical. **יַרְדֵּן** Yārdēn = to descend. LXX. *Ιορδάνης*. Vul. *Jordanis*, called now by the Arabs *Esh-Sheriah* = the watering-place. Has two sources: one rises at the western base of a hill where Dan once stood, and gushes forth a great fountain, the largest in Syria, and, mingling with the waters of another fountain which springs up under an immense oak close by, forms the Leddan (ancient Dan). Four miles east, on a terrace of Hermon, at the foot of a limestone cliff, is the second source, which bursts forth from a yawning abyss in a gloomy cavern. Unitng, these two streams form the Jordan, which flows very rapidly through a deep valley all its length till it is lost in the Dead Sea. Length about 200 miles. . . . *The Arabah* (cf. "Critical Notes," "Literary Criticism"). "This is a name given to the deep, low lying plain on both sides of the Jordan, which runs from the Lake of Gennesaret to the Dead Sea, and stretches southward from the Dead Sea to Aila, at the northern extremity of the Red Sea, as we may very clearly see from Deut. ii. 8, where the way which the Israelites took past Edom to Aila is called the way of the Arabah, and also from the fact that the Dead Sea is called the sea of the Arabah (Deut. iii. 17, iv. 49). At present the name Arabah is simply attached to the southern half of this valley, between the Dead Sea and Red Sea; whilst the northern part, between the Dead Sea and Sea of Galilee, is called El Ghor, though several Arabic geographers extend the name Ghor from the Sea of Galilee to Aila" (*Keil and Delitzsch*). . . . *Red Sea*. **סוּפְּ** Suph. (cf. "Critical Notes," "Literary Criticism"). Keil and Delitzsch make Suph to be the Red Sea. "Some reedy place out of Palestine" (*Fürst*). "Suph, probably a district on the frontier of Moab. Ptolemy mentions a people called Sophonites, who dwelt in Arabia Petrea, and who have been thought to take their name from this place" (*Carpenter*). . . . *Paran*. **פָּאֵרָן** Pā-rān = white. LXX. and Josh. *Φαρὰν*; (a.) A desert = et-Tih; (b.) A mountain near Seir (Deut. xxxiii. 2; Hab. iii. 3); (c.) Probably a town (*Smith's Dictionary*). "Paran may either be *mount* Paran of Deut. xxxiii. 2, or a city mentioned by Eusebius, Jerome, and several modern geographers near the mount" (*Speaker's Commentary*). . . . *Tophel*. **תּוֹפֵל** Tōphēl = plaster, mortar. Probably identical with Tufileh

(*Robinson*); and "a locality so called from the chalk-beds there" (*Fürst*). "It is still a considerable place, some little distance south-east of the Dead Sea" (*Speaker's Commentary*). "Numerous springs and rivulets (ninety-nine according to the Arabs), the waters of which unite below, render the town very agreeable. It is surrounded by a large plantation of fruit-trees — apples, apricots, figs, pomegranates, &c." (*Buckhardt*). . . . *Laban*. לָבָן *Lābān*. Identical with Libnah, this latter being the feminine form of the word; but whether the place mentioned here can be identified with that mentioned Num. xxxiii. 20, remains to be seen. . . . *Hazereth*. הֲצֵרוֹת *Khätzērōth* = "enclosures," "hamlets." In Numbers xi. 35, xii. 16, xxxiii. 17, the LXX. renders it Ἀσρωῶθ, but here Αὐλῶν. Though identified with a station of the Israelites (Num. xi. 35), yet on insufficient evidence. Nothing is known for certain of the place. . . . *Dizahab* (*cf.* "Literary Notes"). . . . "Horeb." הֹרֵב *Khōrēb*.

LXX. Χωρῆβ. "A top of Sinai, on which the Mosaic law was announced, now G'ibl Mûsa. Formerly Horeb was the general name, and Sinai the more restricted" (*Fürst*). On the question of the peculiar and contradictory use of "Horeb" in Deuteronomy, see Note in Kitto's Family Bible, and the articles "Horeb," "Sinai," in the various Dictionaries. "The fixed use of the name Horeb, to designate the mountain group in general, instead of the special name Sinai, which is given to the particular peak whereon the law was given, is in keeping with the rhetorical style of the Book" (*Keil and Delitzsch, cf. &c.*)

*Kadesh Barnea*. קָדֵשׁ בְּרִנֵּעַ *Kādesh Bārneā*. Κάδης Βαρῆ. Sometimes written Kadesh.

It is probable that the term "Kadesh," though applied to a city, had also a wider application, and referred to a region, in which Kadesh-Meribah certainly, and Kadesh Barnea probably, indicates a precise spot. . . . The nearest approximation, then, which can be given to a site for the city of Kadesh, may be probably attained by drawing a circle from the pass Es-Sûfa, at the radius of about a day's journey; its south-western quadrant will intersect the "wilderness of Paran" or Et-Tih, which is there overhung by the superimposed plateau of the mountain of the Amorites; while its south-eastern one will cross what has been designated the "wilderness of Zin." This seems to satisfy all the conditions of the passages of Genesis, Numbers, and Deuteronomy which refer to it. The nearest site in harmony with this view which has yet been suggested is undoubtedly the "Ain-el-Weibeh" (*cf. Smith's Dictionary*). . . .

*Seir*. שֵׁעִיר = "rough" or "rugged." Σηελ. There is a "land" of and "mount" Seir (*cf.* Gen. xxxii. 3, xxxvi. 30, xiv. 6; and Deut. i. 2). Apparently they are the same. The original name of the mountain ridge extended along the east side of the valley of the Arabah from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulph. The name was derived either from Seir, the Horite (Gen. xxxvi. 20), or, more probably, from the rough aspect of the whole country. The sharp and serrated ridges, the jagged rocks and cliffs, the straggling bushes and stunted trees, give the whole scene a sternness and ruggedness almost unparalleled. Mount Seir was originally inhabited by the Horites, who were doubtless the excavators of those singular rock dwellings with which the district abounds. They were dispossessed by the posterity of Esau (Deut. ii. 12).

The mount was the subject of a terrible prophetic curse (Ezek. xxxv.) . . . *Heshbon*. הֶשְׁבֹּן *Kheshbōn* = stronghold. LXX. Ἑσέβων. The capital city of Sihon, king of the Amorites (Num. xxi. 26). It stands on the boundary line between Reuben and Gad. The ruins of Heshbon, twenty miles east of Jordan, mark the site of the ancient city. Chiefly celebrated from its connection with Sihon. After the captivity it fell into the hands of the Moabites. In the fourth century it was a place of note, but now desolate. The ruins of Heshbon stand on a low hill rising out of the great plateau, and are more than a mile in circuit, but not a building is entire. One remarkable structure remains with the workmanship of the different ages visible—the massive stones of the Jewish period, the sculptured cornice of the Roman, the light arch of the Saracenic. Many cisterns and a large reservoir remain. . . .

*Bashan*. הַבָּשָׁן *Hāb-Bāshān*, almost invariably written with the article before it = the basalt land. A district on the east of Jordan. It extended from the borders of Gilead on the south to Mount Hermon on the north; and from the Arabah or Jordan valley on the west to Salekah on the east. At the conquest it was bestowed on the half tribe of Manasseh, and was proverbial for its oaks and bulls. *Astaroth*. עֲשֵׂתָרוֹת *Ashtārōth*. LXX. Ἀστυράωθ. A city on the east of

Jordan in Bashan, in the kingdom of Og, doubtless so called from being a seat of the worship of the goddess of the same name. For the fortunes of A., *cf.* Josh. xiii. 31; 1 Chron. vi. 71. It subsequently passes from history. Jerome tells us it was about six miles from Ada, which was twenty-five from Bostra. The only trace of the name that modern research has discovered is Tell Ashterah (*Ritter, Porter, &c.*) *Edrei*. אֶדְרֵי *Edrēi*. Ἐδραῖν. There are two towns of

this name: one in the north of Palestine, the other to the east of Jordan. It is with the latter that we have to deal. In Scripture it is only mentioned in connection with the victory of Israel over the Amorites under Og. It was one of the two capitals of Bashan (Num. xxi. 33; Deut. i. 4; Josh. xii. 4), and continued to be a large and important city till the seventh century A.D., though no further reference to it is made in Scripture. The ruins of an ancient city, still



bearing the name of Edr'a, stand on a rocky promontory, which projects from the south-west corner of the Lejah. The site a strange one—without water, without access, except most difficult, seems to have been chosen for its strength and security. The identity of this site with the Edrei of Scripture has been challenged, but see "Smith's Dictionary" for full particulars.

. . . . *Lebanon*. לבָּנוֹן L'b'hānōn. Ἀβανός. A mountain range in the north of Palestine. The name Lebanon means "white," and was applied on account of the snow which covers it for the greater part of the year, or on account of the white colour of its limestone rocks, cliffs, and peaks. There are two ranges parallel, named Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, or Lebanon toward the sun-rising, i. e., Eastern L. It was from the western range Solomon obtained his timber. The snow remains in patches the whole year on the summits of Lebanon. There is a very good article on "Lebanon" in "Smith's Dictionary," so too in Kitto. . . . *Euphrates*. פָּרָת

פְּרָת. Εὐφράτης. Probably a word of Arian origin; and if so, means "the good and abounding river." The Euphrates is the largest, longest, and most important river in Western Asia. Its two chief sources are in the Armenian mountains. These two streams flow on, one 270, the other 400 miles, till they meet at Kebban-Maden, where a river is formed 120 yards wide, very deep and rapid. This flows nearly south in a tortuous course, forcing a way through the ranges of Taurus and Anti-Taurus, as if it would break into the Mediterranean, but, opposed by the ranges of Amanus and Lebanon, it turns south-east, and in this direction proceeds 1000 miles into the Persian Gulph. The length is 1780 miles, of which 1200 are navigable for boats and small steamers. The *greatest* width of the river is at a distance of 700 or 800 miles from its mouth, while much lower down it is nearly 300 yards narrower, and not so deep by six feet. The causes of this singular phenomenon are the entire absence of tributaries below the Khabour, and the employment of water in irrigation. . . . *Eshcol*. אֶשְׁכּוֹל Eshcōl. Ἐσχάλα. A wady

in the neighbourhood of Hebron, explored by the spies sent by Moses from Kadesh Barnea. From this fruitful valley was brought a large cluster of grapes, which, from the meaning of the word in Hebrew, explained to the spies the name of the place (Num. xiii. 23, 24). But it may be instructive to remember that, when Abraham dwelt in this locality, the names of the three chiefs of the Amorites, his neighbours, were Aner, *Eshcol*, and Mamre; and possibly the name of one may have attached itself to one of the fertile valleys near their home, when the name would be Amoritic, not Hebrew. . . . *Hormah*. חֶרְמָה Khōrmāh was the chief town of a Canaanitish tribe on the south of Palestine, reduced by Joshua. Its ancient name was Zephath (Judges i. 17). It became subsequently a city of Judah, though apparently belonging to Simeon, whose territory is reckoned part of the former.

### SAURIN'S DISSERTATION ON DEUTERONOMY, CHAP. I.

Moses, being about to die, recapitulates the laws of God in the presence of all Israel. When Moses was about to die, he made a last effort to stamp on the mind of Israel the law he had already given. The speeches made on that occasion form the Book of Deuteronomy—the second law. These discourses were not given all at once, on one day, but on several occasions.

I. He briefly relates to the people the most memorable events that befell them from the time they left Mount Horeb.

(1.) The order they received to make the windings toward the mountains of the Amorites, &c. &c.

(2.) The sending of the spies; their report; the murmurings and punishment of the people; the dreadful oath of God that none should enter the Promised Land.

(3.) The divers tours made by them.

(4.) The victories gained over Sihon

and Og; the distribution of the country of the heathen.

(5.) The prayer of Moses for the revocation of God's sentence on himself.

(6.) The plagues and miracles.

II. Moses recapitulated *all* the laws—moral, ceremonial, political, and military.

III. Moses above all presses most home to the people the law which the Israelites stood in the greatest need of, i. e., that which was calculated to restrain their boundless inclination towards idolatry, and which caused them so often to relapse into it (*cf.* Deut. iv. 15, xiii. 6, &c., xvii. 2, &c.).

IV. Moses established the necessity of knowing the law of God, and of making it the object of perpetual meditation. All must read it: the young has no excuse in his weakness, nor the old in his infirmities (*cf.* vi. 6, 7, &c.).

V. Moses set before the eyes of the Israelites the great reasons which ought

to induce them to make the laws of God the rule of their behaviour.

(1.) All these laws terminated in the love of God as their centre (x. 12, 13).

(2.) These laws are of themselves sufficient to accumulate glory and happiness both on nations and private persons if they observe them religiously (*cf.* iv. 5, 6).

(3.) These laws were made by a Being which had dealt out His wonders and profuseness to a people for whom He had made them (iv. 32).

(4.) These laws draw down numberless blessings upon those who follow them, and as many misfortunes on those that break them (xi. 26).

(5.) These laws are endued with intrinsic justice (iv. 8).

(6.) These laws are adapted to the faculties and understandings of those for whom they were made (xxx. 11).

VI. Moses sharply reproaches the children of Israel for their ingratitude. This is why the Targum calls the book the Book of Reproaches (*cf.* xxxii. 5, 6, xv. 18, xxix. 30).

VII. Moses foretells the catastrophe into which the people should fall through their rebellions (*cf.* xxviii. 62, &c., xxxi. 1, &c.).

After that Moses had taken all the care his wisdom and prudence could suggest to engage the Israelites to be faithful to God, he concludes in lamenting the little success all these remonstrances were likely to produce.—*Epitome of Saurin's lxxviii. Dissertation.*

Ver. 1. "*On this side*," or, *on the outside, i.e., beyond Jordan*, as the Greek translath. This word (בְּעֵבֶר בְּעֵבֶר) signifieth both sides, and by circumstance of place is to be understood. To those out of Canaan, it was on *this* side; to the Israelites in Canaan, it was *beyond*, or the *outside* of Jordan, where Moses spake these things.—*Ainsworth.*

"*On this side.*" To those on the east, it was *this*; to those on the west of Jordan, the *other* side.

"*The plain.*" to wit, of Moab's land, as ver. 5; see Num. xxii. 1. There Moses spake these things and died (Deut. xxxiv. 5). Chald. saith Moses rebuked

them, "because they had provoked God in the plain."—*Ainsworth.*

"*Which Moses spake to ALL.*" An objection raised by some to these words, and thence to the value of the book, is that *all* Israel could not hear. In answer to this, it is said Whitefield was heard distinctly half a mile off. In Australia the "coey" can be heard at a distance of two, or even three miles. Where the air is clear and elastic, as it is in some localities, sound is heard a very long way off. That such was the case in the Sinaitic peninsula seems almost certain from a passage in Dean Stanley's "*Sinai and Palestine*:" "Among the characteristics of Sinai, one must not be omitted—the deep stillness, and consequent reverberations of the human voice. From the highest point of Rás Sasāfeh to its lowest peak, a distance of sixty feet, the page of a book, distinctly but not loudly read, was perfectly audible; and every remark of the various groups of travellers, descending from the heights of the same point, rose clearly to those immediately above them. It was the belief of the Arabs who conducted Niebuhr, that they could make themselves heard across the Gulf of Akaba; a belief doubtless exaggerated, yet probably originated or fostered by the great distance to which, in these regions, the voice can actually be carried."

A question sometimes raised with regard to these early books of the Bible is, how were they preserved? The following may assist some in the presence of this difficulty:—

"Various doubts have sometimes been thrown out as to the existence of writings at this period. Waiving the evidence of the Mosaic records, we may remark that hieroglyphical inscriptions were known upon stone in Egypt at least as early as the fourth dynasty, or B.C. 2450; that inscribed bricks were common in Babylonia about two centuries later, and that writing upon papyruses, both in the hieroglyphics and the hieratic characters, was familiar to the Egyptians under the 18th and 19th dynasties, which is exactly the time to which the Mosaic records would belong. It seems certain

that Moses, if educated by a daughter of one of the Ramesséde kings, would be well acquainted with the Egyptian method of writing with ink upon the papyrus; while it is also probable that Abraham, who emigrated not earlier than the 19th century before our era from the great Chaldean capital Ur, would have brought with and transmitted to his descendants the alphabetic system with which the Chaldeans of his day were acquainted. There is thus every reason to suppose that writing was familiar to the Jews when they quitted Egypt; and the mention of it as a common practice in the books of Moses is in perfect accordance with what we know of the condition of the world at the time from other sources.

"Some writers urge that the Jews could not have learned alphabetic writing from the Egyptians, since 'the mode of representing ideas to the eye, which the Egyptians employed till a period long subsequently, was *widely different* from the alphabetic writing of the Hebrews.' But the difference was not really very great. It is a mistake to suppose that the Egyptian writing was, except to a very small extent, symbolical. Both in the hieroglyphic and the hieratic, as a general rule, *the words are spelt phonetically first*, and are then followed by a symbol or symbols."—*Rawlinson's Bampton Lectures.*

Ver. 2. "This verse seems misplaced; it should come in between vers. 19, 20."—*Horsley*; cf. also Dr. Wall, Kennicott, &c.

"Transcribers are apt to transpose letters, words, or sentences. . . . Transposition of verses may be found in Lamentations ii. iii. and iv."—*Jahn.*

"*Eleven days' journey.*" "So many days' march for a foot army; but Philo, the Jew, saith a horseman might do it in three days (*triduo confici potuit*)."—*Trapp.*

"If it be objected that they spent more days in that journey (Num. xi.-xiii.), we answer that Moses might mean there only the days in which they were upon the march. For according to Adrichomius, who had been upon the spot, the journey itself was too short to

take eleven days. However, no wonder they were eleven days going it, considering the great number of their flocks, and the bulk and weight of their carriage."—*Bibliotheca Biblica.*

"The way was plain, and known between Horeb, whither God brought them on purpose to serve Him, and Kadesh Barnea, which was the beginning of an habitable country (cf. Num. xiii. 26, xx. 16)."—*Maimonides.*

"There is another route, not along the plain of the Arabah and by Mount Seir, but over the high ground to the west."—*Annotated Paragraph Bible.*

"Kadesh is named as the southern point of the Promised Land. In this verse, as in the first, the mind of the reader seems directed to the past history. It was but eleven days' journey from the Mountain of the Covenant to the Promised Land, yet in the fortieth year the chosen people were still in the wilderness."—*Speaker's Commentary.*

"Eleven days' journey from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea;" and yet, in God's providence, the people required *forty years* to accomplish it. What takes the shortest time is not alway the best path. Desert wandering was a preparation for the destined goal. However diversified the opinions of men in religion, all are agreed that the end and aim of life is not *here*. Life is but a preparation. Man's true destiny is immortality. Two things necessary for the man who would reach his true destiny—

I. That we may reach our true destiny, **Christ must take hold of us.** Several forces in society are laying hold of men—ambition, avarice, lust, pleasure, pride, superstition. One or more, perhaps all, grasp and hold men. They extend around him like some dense poisoning fog, robbing the man of both light and strength. While environed with such, or indeed any form of sin, Christ would break His way into us with help. "I came not to call the righteous but sinners" (cf. similar texts; cf. also 1 Tim. i. 14, 16; 1 Pet. ii. 3; Acts x. 36, xiii. 38, 39; Col. ii. 13).

II. That we may reach our true destiny, **we must take hold of Christ.**



(a.) We take hold of Christ by faith in Him.

(b.) We show our faith in Him as well as our love to Him by keeping His commandments (John xiv. 15, xv. 10; James ii. 17, 18; Gal. v. 6).

(c.) We also take hold of Christ by taking refuge in His atonement.

"In the East there is a tree which is a non-conductor of electricity. The people know it, and, when a storm comes, they flee to it for safety. Beautiful picture of the Saviour! Beautiful emblem of Calvary! It is a non-conductor of wrath. Get underneath it, and you are safe for ever."—*Thomas Jones*.

Ver. 3. "Fortieth year" of Israel's coming out of Egypt. In the first month of this year, Mary (Miriam), Moses's sister, died (Num. xx. 1). In the first day of the fifth month thereof, Aaron, his brother, died (Num. xxxiii. 38); and now, at the end of the year, Moses himself dieth, when he had repeated the law, and renewed the covenant between God and *His people* Israel.—*Ainsworth*.

Moses spoke what the *Lord* had commanded him; in other words, Moses gave the people what God had given him (*cf.* Acts iii. 6). Though the words were Moses's, the thing uttered was of God. Some speak according to the wisdom of the world: they can tell much about its craft, villany, rottenness, hollowness; and they preach *selfishness*, more or less refined, as a means of personal defence, and the true source of success. Some speak according to one thing; others according to something else: Moses spoke according to what God had given him. He therefore spoke God's truth.

I. Because Moses spoke God's truth he uttered what would be advantageous to the people. The path of happiness is the way of wisdom. Wisdom is happiness as well as pleasant (Prov. viii.). True wisdom is the fear of God (Job xxviii. 28). The man who declares God's truth instructs in wisdom and leads men to happiness. Happiness is what men are seeking. Those who conduct others into happiness meet an universal want. Blessed is the man

who supplies widespread demands! He gives bread to the hungry.

"The happy have whole days, and these they use;  
The unhappy have but hours, and those they lose."  
—*Dryden*.

"True happiness (if understood)  
Consists alone in doing good."  
—*Somerville*.

"No man is blest by accident or guess;  
*True wisdom* is the price of happiness."  
—*Young*.

"The only happiness a brave man ever troubles himself with asking much about is the happiness to get his work done. Not 'I can't eat!' but 'I can't work!'—that was the burden of all wise complaining among men."—*T. Carlyle*.

"Happiness is no other than soundness and perfection of mind."—*Antoninus*.

"Happiness . . . the inward complacency we find in acting reasonably."  
—*Atterbury*.

"There are two ways of being happy: we may either diminish our wants or augment our means; either will do; the result is the same. It is for each man to decide for himself, and do what happens to be the easier. If you are idle, or sick, or poor, however hard it may be to diminish your wants, it will be harder to augment your means. If you are active and prosperous, or young and in good health, it may be easier for you to augment your means than diminish your wants. But if you are wise, you will do both at the same time, . . . and if you are very wise, you will do both in such a way as to augment the general happiness of society." — *B. Franklin*.

"Religion directs us rather to secure inward peace than outward ease."—*Tillotson*.

"The happiness of life consists, like the day, not in single flashes (of light), but in one continuous mild serenity. The most beautiful period of the heart's existence is in this calm, equable light, even though it be only moonlight or twilight. Now the mind alone can obtain for us this heavenly cheerfulness and peace."—*Richter*.

II. Because Moses spoke what God gave him, he could speak—



(a.) With courage.

(b.) With power.

(c.) *With courage*—God on his side.

“He holds no parley with unmanly fears;  
Where duty bids, he confidently steers,  
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,  
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them  
all.”  
—*Cowper*.

“Courage consists, not in blindly overlooking danger, but in seeing it and conquering it.”—*Richter*.

“A great deal of talent is lost in the world for the want of a little courage. Every day sends to their graves a number of obscure men, who have remained in obscurity because their timidity has prevented them from making a first effort; and who, if they could have been induced to begin, would in all probability have gone great lengths in the career of fame.”—*Sidney Smith*.

“The truest courage is always mixed with circumspection; this being the quality which distinguishes the courage of the wise from the hardness of the rash and foolish.”—*Jones of Naylands*.

“Courage mounteth with occasion.”  
—*Shakespeare*.

*An example of courage.*—Henry III., king of France, one day said to Palissy the potter, who was a Calvinist, that “he would be compelled to give him (Palissy) up to his enemies unless he changed his religion.” “You have often said to me, sire,” was the undaunted reply of Palissy, “that you pitied me; but as for me, I pity you, who have given utterance to such words as, ‘I shall be compelled.’ These are unkingly words; and I say to you, in royal phrase, that neither the Guises, nor all your people, nor yourself, are able to compel a humble manufacturer of earthenware to bend his knee to statues.”

(b.) *With power*: he would speak as one having authority, and not as the scribes (*cf.* Matt. vii. 29). His words were not the echoes of another man’s experience: the words spoken represent *things* real and living in his own heart.

“There is no keeping back the power we have;

He hath no power who hath no power to use.”  
—*Bailey*.

“Power shows the man.”—*Pittachus*.

“He speaks with power, because as strong as heaven’s heat, and as its brightness clear” (*Hill*); or “as the rock of ocean, that stems a thousand wild waves on the shore.”—*Campbell*.

III. Because Moses *spoke* what God gave him to speak, he relieved himself of a great responsibility.

(a.) Commissions are sometimes intrusted to men by God which they are afraid to execute. They thereby entail calamity upon themselves and all connected with them (*cf.* Jonah).

(b.) Duties imposed by God, if neglected, bring desolation on the man and his family (*cf.* Achan, Judges vii.).

(c.) Knowledge, wisdom, visions of the Divine glory, are vouchsafed to men to be used for the improvement of the world, the upholding of the Church, and the honour of God. If *misused*, the consequences will be terrible (*cf.* Balaam, Solomon, our own Lord Byron).

(d.) Money, influence, opportunity, is intrusted to many in these days. Such is not to be lavished on ourselves. God gave it: He expects it to be used in His service. Moses recognised this. His power, his thoughts, came *from* God, he used them *for* God, and therefore spoke what God gave him to speak. He thus relieved himself of a great responsibility. To all are intrusted “talents”—five, two, one. If we hide, or misuse, or waste, God will punish, and take from us even what we have (*cf.* Shakespeare’s “Julius Cæsar,” iv. 3—

“There is a tide in the affairs of men,

And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our venture.”

“Opportunity has hair in front, behind she is bald; if you seize her by the forelock you may hold her, but, if suffered to escape, not Jupiter himself can *catch her again*.”

“Miss not the occasion; by the forelock take  
That subtle power, the never-halting Time,  
Lest a mere moment’s putting off should  
make  
Mischance almost as heavy as a crime.”

—*Wordsworth*.

“All men, if they work not as in a Great Taskmaster’s eye, will work wrong,

work unhappily for themselves, and for you.”—*Carlyle*.

“Thousands of men breathe, move, and live, pass off the stage of life, and are heard of no more. Why? They do not partake of good in the world, and none were blessed by them; none could point to them as the means of their redemption; not a line they wrote, not a word they spoke, could be recalled, and so they perished; their light went out in darkness, and they were not remembered more than the insects of yesterday. Will you thus live and die, O man immortal? Live for something. Do good, and leave behind you a monument of virtue.”—*Chalmers*.

“No man is born unto himself alone.

Who lives unto himself, he lives to none:

The world’s a body, each man a member is,  
To add some measure to the public bliss.

Where much is given, there much shall be required.”

—*Quarles*.

Ver. 4. “After he had slain Sihon.”

If Samson had not turned aside to see the lion that not long before he had slain, he had not found the honey in the carcass (Judges xiv. 8). So if we recognise not our dangers, deliverances, and achievements, we shall neither taste how sweet the Lord is nor return Him His due praise. So true thankfulness is required.

I. Recognition.

II. Estimation.

III. Retribution (*cf.* Ps. cxvi. 3, 7, 12.—*Trapp*).

The slaughter of Sihon and Og was an encouragement to Israel for their after wars, and an argument to move them unto thankful obedience to the law now repeated.—*Ainsworth*.

“Sihon, the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon.”

For situation of Heshbon, *cf.* “Critical Notes.” Meaning of Heshbon is “stronghold.” Sihon dwelt in a stronghold. Here was shelter and safety. In doing this he showed his wisdom. But the wisest is sometimes unwise. Sihon betrayed his humanity. He left his stronghold, and so was guilty of two foolish things: he left a stronghold, and he joined the heathen to fight against God and His people. These

words are fraught with instruction, for they bring Sihon before us as an *example* and *warning*.

I. Sihon as an example. He did well to dwell in a stronghold.

(a.) A stronghold is a place fortified by nature or art: it is made strong by God or man. It is a place of security. The *soul* needs a place of security where to flee from spiritual foes. The Psalmist frequently spoke of God as his fortress (*cf.* Ps. xi. 2, xxxi. 3, lxxi. 3, xci. 2, cxliv. 2).

Shakespeare has well said—

“God is our fortress, in whose conquering  
name

Let us resolve to scale their flinty bulwarks.”

To which we may add from the same writer—

“It is a fortified residence ‘gainst the tooth of  
Time,  
And rasure of Oblivion.”

To the Christian, God in Christ is the stronghold. Though the imagery for the most part (Christ as a Rock) is that of a *foundation* (Matt. vii. 24; Rom. ix. 33; 1 Pet. ii. 8), yet the metaphor is open in other places for other interpretation (*cf.* 1 Cor. x. 4). Christ as a rock is a rock to be made use of by man. Man is to use Christ as a foundation to build upon. Christ will be to men now what the rock was to Israel in the desert: *that* whence flows the stream of spiritual life. Men are to drink of this water or build on this foundation—it matters not which metaphor is used—by *faith* (*cf.* Acts xvi. 31; 1 Cor. iii. 10–16; John xvi. 7).

(b.) Where a man has security he has peace. Because the Christian feels secure in Christ he rests. Dwell on the *power of faith* in producing a sense of security and rest (*cf.* Binney’s Pract. Nat. of Faith).

II. Sihon as a warning. He left the stronghold where he had enjoyed peace and protection to join the enemies of God. No better warning for the young. If we forsake God, God will forsake us. “Those that honour me I will honour.” “Those that seek shall find.” There are two sources of temptation to the inexperienced: *inquisitiveness* and *pleasure*.

(a.) Inquisitiveness has not infre-

quently tempted the young to leave the safe shelter of faith in Christ to dabble in the muddy currents of scientific and philosophic speculation, and to rush into the storms raised by supposed discoveries of unbelief. Such have quickly found they trod a path beset with thorns. To such Sihon is a warning.

(b.) Pleasure has induced men to forsake the garden about the Cross, where Rest, Joy, Safety, and Peace lingered, notwithstanding the transverse shadows upon the ground, to taste fruits of trees that grew beyond. They were not satisfied with what Christ gave. The angels' food sickens. They lust for the things of Egypt (*cf.* Eve in the garden). The Bible is thrown aside for the novel. The prayer-meeting is exchanged for the play. Virtue sometimes even is lost (*cf.* Samson). Contrast the choice of Hercules in Xenophon's "Memorabilia."

"To what gulphs

A single deviation from the track  
Of human duties lead." —Byron.

(c.) Gain and worldly reward have induced some to forsake God and His Church (*cf.* conduct of Balaam, Judas; Num. xxiii. 10, xxxi. 8, 16; Mic. vi. 5; 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11).

Men in the present day desire the "wages of unrighteousness" and "the pleasures of sin," and for them pay the price, "unrighteousness," "sin," the DEATH of their soul: they betray "the Lord of life and glory," "crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame." Let such take warning of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who forsook his stronghold to join the enemies of God.

Ver. 5. "In the end of this fortieth year, in the beginning of the month Shebat, Moses called the people together, saying, The time of my death draweth nigh; if any one therefore hath forgot anything that I have delivered, let him come and receive it; or, if anything seem dubious, let him come that I may explain it. And so they say in Siphri, If any one have forgotten any constitution, let him come and hear it the second time; if he need to have anything unfolded, let him come and hear the explanation of it." —Maimonides on this verse.

"Began Moses to declare." "Explain." —Patrick.

He "began," or, better perhaps, "undertook," to "declare the law," *i.e.*, explain and elucidate it. Such is the force of the Hebrew verb בָּאֵר (*bēer*), a word implying the pre-existence of the matter on which the process is employed, and so the substantial identity of the Deuteronomic legislation with that of the previous books. LXX. διασαφῆσαι: Vul. *explanare*. —Speaker's Commentary.

"Began." Willingly took upon him, for the word implies willingness and contentedness (*cf.* Gen. xviii. 27). So all ministers should feed their flocks "willingly and of a ready mind" (1 Pet. v. 2). Moses began to declare as Jesus (*cf.* Luke xii. 1; Matt. xvi. 6). "Disciples began to pluck," &c. (Matt. xii. 1).

"To declare." To make plain, clearly manifest to the understanding of the people, as in Hab. ii. 2. A thing is said to be made plain in writing that he may run that readeth it. —Ainsworth.

וְהָיָה = to be willing, not began. In Gen. xviii. 27, this word is rendered by "I have taken upon me" (Exod. ii. 21). "Moses was content." —Delgado.

The best inheritance that a rich man can leave to his children is Christian instruction in the discipline and admonition of the Lord, and thorough education in the arts and sciences. —Geier.

He who really fears God will say nothing concerning Him but that which proceeds from his innermost heart, and vow nothing but what he is resolved inviolably to keep. —Hengstenberg.

"Declare." The Hebrew word means properly to engrave, to hew in stone: which is there used of the deeper impressing and imprinting on the heart by means of exhortation and explanation. —Gerlach.

The address of Moses is in perfect harmony with his situation. He speaks like a dying father to his children. The words are earnest, inspired, impressive. He looks back over the whole of the forty years of their wandering in the desert, reminds the people of all the blessings they have received, of the ingratitude with which they have so often



repaid them, and of the judgments of God, and the love that continually broke forth behind them; he explains the laws again and again, and adds what is necessary to complete them, and is never weary of urging obedience to them in the warmest and most emphatic words, because the very life of the nation was bound up with this; he surveys all the storms and the conflicts which they have passed through, and, beholding the future in the past—viz., apostasy, punishment, and pardon—continue to repeat themselves in the future also.—*Hengstenberg.*

“On *this* side Jordan,” &c., &c.

Moses repeated the law as soon as he had opportunity, and circumstances required it. He did not wait till the promised land was entered. The work of *to-day* was not delayed till the morrow. It was done at once. He did it where he was—in the land of the Gentiles—surrounded with heathen—in the country of foes. (*Cf.* here Carlyle’s words “America is *here* or nowhere.”) Trapp with no little humour remarks on these words, “And he was not long about it. A ready heart makes a riddance of God’s work, for being oiled with the Spirit, it becomes lithe and nimble and quick of despatch.” Three practical hints—

I. What is to be done do at once. Moses on *this* side of Jordan began to speak. Had Moses been a boy at school, he would not have put off his prayers till he got home where there were no school-fellows to chaff. He would have said them then and there.

“Let us take the instant by the forward lip.”  
—*Shakespeare.*

“Shun delays, they breed remorse;

Take thy time while time is lent thee;

• Creeping snails have weakest force;

Fly their faults, lest thou repent thee.

Good is best when soonest wrought;

Lingering labours come to nought.”

—*Southwell.*

“At thirty man suspects himself a fool;

Knows it at forty, and reforms his plans;

At fifty chides his infamous delay,

Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve;

In all the magnanimity of thought

Resolves: and re-resolves: then dies the same.”

—*Young.*

“We find out some excuse or other for deferring good resolutions.”—*Addison.*

“There is no moment like the present.”—*Maria Edgeworth.*

Thou art a passenger, and thy ship hath put into harbour for a few hours. The tide and the wind serve, and the pilot calls thee to depart, and thou art amusing thyself and gathering shells and pebbles on the shore till they set sail without thee. So every Christian who, being on his voyage to a happy eternity, delays and loiters, and thinks and acts as if he were to dwell here for ever.—*Jortin.*

II. Do not think that there will be a more propitious time than the present.

(1.) Dallying with duties does not diminish difficulties.

(2.) Delay positively increases difficulties. Power unused decreases. If duty is deferred a day, we are a day’s wasted strength the weaker.

(3.) We know what is to be done *now*: to-morrow it may be forgotten. Cares of life will usurp attentions. The duties are pushed aside—choked down—killed. Weeds grow faster than corn (*cf.* parable of the sower). Cares and duties come quicker than time.

“Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into conduct. Nay, properly, conviction is not possible till then, inasmuch as all speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices: only by a felt indubitable certainty of experience does it find any centre to revolve round, and so fashion itself into a system. Most true is it, as a wise man teaches us, that “doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by action. On which ground, too, let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to me was of invaluable service: ‘*Do the duty which lies nearest thee,*’ which thou knowest to be a duty! Thy second duty will already have become clearer.”—*Carlyle.*

III. Do some good things in this life—in the desert, so called, on *this* side Jordan. Do not wait till heaven is reached, that angels alone may be witness of your good deeds. Moses did not defer till the promised land was

reached. He did what he was able *out* of the promised land. It was well he did. He never reached Canaan. Had he put off all till *then*, nothing would have been done. Perhaps you may never reach heaven: probably you will not if there is so little of the spirit of Christ in you as to permit an utterly indolent life. Remember Dives! Do something worth remembering, that you may have one pleasant memory to carry into hell with you: perhaps a sufficiency of such reminiscences may so brighten the gloom of those infernal regions as to make the hell a heaven.

"How dangerous to defer those moments which conscience is solemnly preaching to the heart! If they are neglected, the difficulty and indisposition are increasing every month."—*John Foster*.

Ver. 6. The first and introductory address of Moses to the people is here commenced. It extends to ch. iv. 40, and is divided from the second discourse by vers. 41-49, which are obviously of a different character from those which precede and follow them. Addressing the people on the very threshold of the promised land, Moses summarily recalls to them the manifold proofs they had experienced of the care and faithfulness of God toward them, and the manifold instances of their own perverseness and rebellion. These their sins had shut them out during a whole generation from the inheritance covenanted to be given to their fathers. The warning is thus most effectively pointed—that they should not by new transgressions debar themselves from those blessings which even now lay before their eyes; and the way is appropriately prepared for that recapitulation and reinforcement of the law of the covenant which it is the main purpose of Deuteronomy to convey.—*Speaker's Commentary*.

"Dwelt long enough." "From the third month of the first year (Exod. xix. 1) to twentieth day of the second year after they came out of Egypt (Num. x. 11), they stayed at Mount *Sinai*, which is the same with *Horeb*, they being only two tops of the same mountain, one of

them something higher than the other, as they are described by those who have taken a view of them."—*Patrick*.

Ainsworth more correctly says: "They came to that mount in the third month after their departure out of Egypt (Exod. xii. 1, 2), and removed from the mount 'the twentieth of the second month in the second year' (Num. x. 11, 12); so they remained there almost a year, where they received the law, or Old Testament, and had made a Tabernacle for God to dwell among them: from thence God called them by word and sign, the cloud removing (Num. x. 11, 13, 33); to journey toward Canaan, the land promised to Abraham, the figure of their heavenly inheritance by faith in Christ. The law is not for man to continue under, but for a time, till they be fitted and brought unto Christ (see Gal. iii. 16, 17, 18, iv. 1-5; Heb. iii. 18, 19, iv. 6-11.)"

"The great Primate of Ireland thinks that Moses spoke from here to chap. iv. 40 on February 20, and on the Sabbath day."—*Bibliotheca Biblica*.

"*In Horeb*." It has been remarked as a discrepancy that *Sinai* of the other books is always called *Horeb* in Deuteronomy. But this is met by the note in Exod. xix. 2, where it is shown that *Horeb* is the general name of the whole mountain, and *Sinai* is the special name of a particular part of it. This distinction is scrupulously observed everywhere in the Pentateuch. The name *Sinai* is, however, not wanting in the book, for we find it in xxxiii. 2 (*cf.* long note on Exod. xix. 2, "Kitto's Family Bible," *Sinai*, in Dic.—*Kitto*).

Humbled they must be, and hammered for a season: sense of misery goes before a sense of mercy.—*Trapp*.

Dr. Wright says "*by Horeb*," but I know not his reason, as they were "*in Horeb*."—*Delgado*.

"Dwelt long enough" implies that the purpose for which Israel was taken to *Horeb* had been answered, *i.e.*, they had been furnished with laws and ordinances requisite for the fulfilment of the covenant, and could now remove to Canaan to take possession of the promised Land. The word of Jehovah men-

tioned here is not found in this form in the previous history ; but, as a matter of fact, it is contained in the Divine instructions that were preparatory to their removal (Num. i. 4, ix. 15, x. 20), and the rising of the cloud from the Tabernacle, which followed immediately afterwards (Num. x. 1). The fixed use of the name Horeb to designate the mountain group in general, instead of the special name Sinai, which is given to the particular mountain upon which the law was given, is in keeping with the rhetorical style of the book.—*Keil and Delitzsch.*

“*Dwelt.*” “*Sitten much.*”—*Ainsworth.*

“The Lord our God spake unto us.” Benisch renders the verse—“The Eternal our God,” &c. These words are powerfully suggestive of fellowship with the unseen universe. Contact with the verse is like wandering in the depth of some virgin forest, dark, boundless, at midnight the twinkling stars above only revealing the intense, mysterious darkness, and the hidden terror. Whether this speech was audible or silent, whether heard by the sense of the imagination, matters very little. The word God spoke *was* heard *somehow*, and to the hearer the word was real, as well as the speaker. Two thoughts suggested here—

I. Man has a capacity to hold communion with God.

(a.) This is done by means of a special and peculiar faculty. As the eye sees, and the heart loves ; so the spirit that is in man communes with the Spirit that is in God.

(b.) This faculty may be *alive* or *dead*. “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (*cf.* Gen.).

II. Man’s power of hearing God depends upon his relationship with God. When Christ heard His Father *speak*, the people said it “thundered.” When Paul heard the voice of Christ by the way, those with him heard it *not* (Acts xxii. 9). When the Spirit descended upon Jesus as a dove, *John the Baptist* and *Jesus* beheld it, but we do not know that the *people* saw it.

“Communion with God will, even in this life, greatly increase our conformity to Him ; the truth of this is confirmed

by common observation. Assimilation is always a consequence of association with others. There is in man a natural aptness and tendency to imitate those who are his most constant companions. If two persons very dissimilar in disposition, habits, and manner of expression, were for a few days only to associate together, they would visibly approximate each other. Just so the praying soul, by conversing with God, is in some measure assimilated to His likeness. The object of worship will in some measure always be the object of imitation. God is the standard of moral excellence, and by contemplating His perfections our corruptions are counteracted, His image is enstamped upon us, and our minds are raised above their natural level. Thus the exercise of fervent prayer elevates, strengthens, purifies, comforts, and enriches the believing soul. They who would be rich in grace must be much in prayer to God : He will beautify them with the beams of His holiness, as Moses’s face shone when he returned from the mount ; ‘beholding in the exercise of faith and prayer the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory.’ And herein the work of prayer on earth resembles that of praise in heaven ; for which more exalted worship it is, no doubt, intended ultimately to prepare us.”—*Christian Family’s Assistant.*

Anything lower than a life of communion with God in Christ is repudiated by the Christian idea as an imperfect and sinful life. It may possess much that the world calls virtue—it may be honest, industrious, and self-sacrificing—it may even show a strength and consistent manliness that some manifestations of the Christian life are found to fail in ; but, nevertheless, it is of an inferior quality. It not merely comes short of it, but it does not really touch the Christian ideal ; for it is impossible to separate the life of man from God without fatal injury to that life. If God *is*, and if we are His creatures, our being cannot grow into any healthy or perfect form while we remain divorced in spirit and in love from Him. Certain elements of character may flourish in us, but cer-



tain others, and still more important, elements must be wanting.—*Dr. Tulloch*.

"You will find it more difficult to walk closely with Jesus in a calm than in a storm, in easy circumstances than in straits. A Christian never falls asleep in the fire or in the water, but grows drowsy in the sunshine."—*John Berridge*.

Communion with heaven—

"When one who holds communion with the  
skies  
Has filled his urn where the pure waters  
rise,  
And once more mingles with us meaner  
things,  
'Tis even as an angel shook his wings;  
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide."  
—*Cowper*.

Ver. 7. "Turn you, take your journey," *i.e.*, "Resume the journey long intermitted."—*Patrick*.

"The Amorites, as the most warlike and powerful people, stand here for all the Canaanites."—*Gerlach*.

"Mount of the Amorites," *i.e.*, to the mountain district occupied by the Amorites, reaching into the Negeb, and part of the territory assigned to the tribe of Judah. The Amorites, as the leading people of Canaan, here stand for the nations of that country generally (see ver. 44); and "the mountain of the Amorites, and the places nigh thereunto (or more literally, "All its neighbours"), denote the whole district, which is more particularly specified in the concluding part of the verse."—*Speaker's Commentary*.

"Canaan was naturally divided, according to the character of the ground, into the *Arabah*, the modern Ghor; the *mountain*, the subsequent mountains of Judah and Ephraim; the *lowlands* (*sh'phêlâh*), *i.e.*, the low flat country lying between the mountains of Judah and the Mediterranean Sea, and stretching from the promontory of Carmel down to Gaza, which is intersected by only small undulations and ranges of hills, and generally includes the hill country which formed the transition from the mountains to the plains, though the two are distinguished in Josh. x. 40, and xii. 8; the *south land* (*nêgêb*), lit. dryness, aridity, from נֶגֶב, to be dry or

arid. Hence the dry, parched land, in contrast to the well-watered country (Josh. xv. 19; Judges i. 15), was the name given to the southern district of Canaan, which forms the transition from the desert to the strictly cultivated land, and bears for the most part the character of a steppe, in which tracts of sand and heath are intermixed with shrubs, grass, and vegetables, whilst here and there corn is also cultivated; a district, therefore, which was better fitted for grazing than for agriculture, though it contained a number of towns and villages (*cf.* Josh. xv. 21–23); and the *sea-shore*, *i.e.*, the generally narrow strip of coast running along by the Mediterranean Sea from Joppa to the Tyrian Ladder, or Râs el Abiad, just below Tyre. The special mention of *Lebanon* in connection with the land of the Canaanites, and the enumeration of the separate parts of the land, as well as the extension of the eastern frontier as far as the Euphrates, are to be attributed to the rhetorical fullness of the style."—*Keil and Delitzsch*.

Ver. 5–8. Subject: God's address to His people. "The Lord our God spake" (ver. 6). The words were spoken to Israel. Israel in a special and pre-eminent sense was God's people (Exod. iii. 7, v. 1; *cf.* "My people" in Concordance). They were the covenant people as far as the covenant then extended. Though the *grace* and *truth* came by Jesus Christ, yet the *Law* was given by Moses. The Jew had an earnest of the future greater gift. Of this fact we are in a measure reminded by the sketch of their history given in the chapter, as likewise by the relation of Moses to their history. He was the prophet. The prophet is the mouthpiece of God. Moses spoke and acted only for God: he was but the vicegerent: God was the true King of Israel. His glory was displayed to Israel in miracle and providential protection. But even more specially and pre-eminently than the Jew is the Christian Church the people of God. To such this passage, in its spiritual application, is full of instruction.

I. God in His address to His people enjoins *action*. "Not slothful" is the



apostolic command. "Ye have dwelt" (Ainsworth: 'sitten much') "long enough." The time of inactivity is over. "Turn you, take your journey." God enjoins on His people to be like Himself. He is ever active. The whole seven days round *His* energies are going forth in creating and blessing. For six days He creates: on the seventh He is active in blessing (*cf.* Gen. ii. 1, 3). Not less active than the Father is the Son. Week-day and Sabbath He exerted Himself to make man happier and the world brighter. His reason for this He gives in John v. 17. It is not unnatural, therefore, that God seeks in His people qualities so largely developed in Himself. God does *not* want idlers in His vineyard. Man was put into the garden of the world to work (*cf.* Gen. ii. 15). In the parable, too, the men had to go and *labour* who received the penny (*cf.* Matt. xx. 8). "Call the *labourers*."

However, God permits *some* rest. Life is not all work. Storm and calm, battle and peace, make history.

But still the law of life and growth is, the more we do within certain limits the more we are able to do. This is true both physically and spiritually. People of impaired health by proper exercise become strong. The morally weak are strengthened by the exercise of trial. It was on this account that Paul "gloried in tribulation." It made him spiritually greater. So men find now. The more kind a man tries to be, the more he is. So with faith, patience, hope. *Cf.* Abraham's faith and its growth: first he leaves home; then he offers his son in obedience to the Divine injunction uttered in his heart. It is easier to leave home than sacrifice one's own child. But Abraham was led up to this latter. God speaks both in the words of Scripture and in the voice of life's circumstances and conditions, ever eloquent, saying, "Turn you, take your journey." In other words, "*Do something*." As children of God, be like your fathers. Let what energies you possess go forth in activity, and thus by the action of to-day prepare for greater activity on the morrow.

II. God advises with regard to the

nature, direction, and extent of this action.

(a.) *Nature* of the action. Let it be action with a purpose in view. Some people are always beating the air. Much energy is spent in noise and flurry, but no work is done. Have an aim in life. "Go to the mount of the Amorites."

(b.) *Direction* of the action. Two hints with regard to that—

(1.) Let it go forth. It does not do for a man's action to turn in on himself. Uniform selfishness is as injurious as constant introspection; and ceaseless introspection is as ruinous as unmixed selfishness. Live for others as well as self: *work* for others.

(2.) This is modified by another hint. Go to what is near *first*. In kindly thought for the universe, a man is not to forget his own. *Cf.* 1 Tim. v. 8. Jesus when dying for the world did not forget His own mother at His feet.

(c.) *Extent* of the action. Though we are to begin with what is near, though what is at hand is of *primary* import, we are not to restrict our thoughts nor our actions to our own. *Begin* at the near, then proceed to what is more remote, till the whole world is affected by your life: *e.g.*—

(1.) First to the *plain*. Read part of the Bible easily understood and applied. Interpret providence as far as you can trace a *Father's* hands. What cannot be understood leave for a future day and clearer lights.

(2.) After this go to the *hill*. Do not mind a difficulty sometimes. A little adversity strengthens the soul. Trust is perfected in suffering. Many a seed has matured into a noble plant when cast down into the earth.

(3.) Now you may proceed to the *vale*. Reverently step where the long, deep shadows fall. There is the "valley of the shadow of death"—"the valley of humiliation"—"the valley of vision." Here the soul is quickened and brought into that region of experience that Paul designates as being "hidden with Christ in God."

(4.) Thus prepared with "the whole armour of God," go to the "*south*." Here were hills infested with foes. So

the Christian, after mounting the Hill of Transfiguration with Christ, where for a moment the Divine glory is manifested, has to go back again to a world where man has to contend with demons (*cf.* Matt. xvii. 14-18)—where he has to grapple with many a spiritual foe, wolves in sheep's clothing, the lion that seeks to devour, the subtle serpent. But go to the "*south*." God "has not called us to bondage"—the bondage of the cloister: or to linger in dim-lighted religious cell, as if life was to be consumed in feeling. "Fight the good fight of faith." Go where the enemy awaits.

(5.) Then comes the reward. Having gone to the "*south*," the people might turn aside to the *sea*. Here an entirely new field of experience was to break upon their vision. Hitherto they had wandered amid arid sands and rocky wastes. Now they come to the sea, where the beauty and glory of the heavens would be reflected in the silent depths of the waters, grace and mystery being added (*cf.* Ps. cvii. 23, 24). So does God bring the Christian after long and hard toil to gaze into those depths of love and grace which are as oceans mirroring the midnight skies.

(6.) After such revelation of God's glory and power, the people of God can go forth to war with the Canaanite. The kingdom of Christ is extended to Lebanon (the far north)—to the river (the far east). The whole world is filled with the glory of the Lord.

Such are the various stages of Christian experience and work. From what is simple to what is complex, from the near to the distant, the soul lives and labours till all be complete.

III. God, in His address, points out how rightly-directed action will bring its own reward. "Behold, I have set (*Heb.* 'given') the land before you: go in and possess."

(a.) True work is sure to bring recompense of some kind.

"If little labour, little are our gains;  
Man's fortunes are according to his pains."  
—*Herrick*.

It, first, brings *external* reward. A day's work brings the day's wages. The

sowings of spring are followed by the harvests of autumn.

It, secondly, brings an *internal* reward in a man's own nature and being.

"Service shall with steeled sinews toil,  
And labour shall refresh itself with hope."  
—*Shakespeare*.

"Moderate labour of the body conduces to the preservation of health, and cures many initial diseases."—*Dr. W. Harvey*.

"Excellence is never granted to man but as the reward of labour."—*Sir J. Reynolds*.

(b.) Show what *work* is. Distinguish work from pleasure. Pleasure is the expending of energy without any end or purpose save the sensations caused by the act of waste, whereby pleasure has been defined as "dissipating enjoyments;" work is energy expended for a purpose. In its idea it is conservative. Work is action to get a return for the energy so spent, both to recuperate and increase the power thus employed. Pleasure seeks nothing save the sensation; work demands a recompense. God promises to *work* its recompense. "*Go in and possess*."

Ver. 9. "I am not able." "Political and ecclesiastical labours are very great."  
—*Luther*.

"None have so hard a tug of it as magistrates and ministers."—*Trapp*.

"If we had not business and cares and fears above all private persons, we should be equal to the gods."—*Dio. Cassius*.

"Moses constrained to this not only by the consciousness of his own inability, but by the advice of Jethro and the command of God (*cf.* Exod. xviii. 14, 18, 19, 21, 23)."—*Ainsworth*.

"I am not able." "We do not read before now that Moses spake thus; but Jethro spoke thus, Exod. xviii., and gave advice (Exod. xviii. 21) to get help, which Moses took (ver. 24), and then told the people what Jethro said."—*Patrick*.

"At that time." After the giving of the law.—*Selden*.

"I spake unto you," &c. "It seems that in the following account two histories are comprised in one; the ap-

pointment of the judges at the advice of Jethro (Exod. xviii.) and the installing of the seventy elders by the communication of the Spirit to them (Num. xi. 16). The first institution, which was of man's origin, received its consecration by the latter act. The division of the whole people into corporations under heads, also inspired by the Spirit of God as Moses, made the whole unformed mass into one people."—*Gerlach*.

"I am not able," &c.

I. His was work entirely beyond social help. Such labour becomes more difficult from the loneliness of the worker. Many a minister feels his work hard through his solitude.

II. Such work often entails more self-denial than mortal man can endure. God's grace goes a long way. Still man has the weakness of the flesh to sap his energies. "It is not good for man to be alone."

III. It was work involving self-denial for the very people who caused him all his troubles and anxieties.

The character of Moses.

"The ancients are full of it. . . .

His piety, his meekness, his patience and self-denial, his magnanimity, his impartiality, his public spirit and tender love to his nation, his wisdom and judgment, his learning, and all those adorning qualities and happy accomplishments that distinguished this great and excellent man (not even the gracefulness of his person omitted), are there mentioned with such handsome simplicity and plainness of style and narration, as is nowhere else to be found, and perhaps cannot be imitated; such as at once recommends the pattern of the man and vouches the truth of the story."

—*Bibliotheca Biblica*.

"I am not able to bear you," &c. A tone of suffering and weariness is in these words. The true leaders of men are not infrequently compelled to go counter to the prejudice, vice, and sin of their age. Every age has repeated the past and foreshadowed the future in that particular. Moses was true to his vocation. Sorely he suffered.

I. The depravity of his age.

(a.) The people a horde of barbarians.

(b.) Coarse, selfish, idolatrous.

(c.) Almost blind to the spiritual.

II. The magnanimity of his character.

(a.) True antidote of an evil generation is a magnanimous leader. More is done by example than by precept.

(b.) The burdens of life make a truly great character greater.

Compare with this the effect of the pure, magnanimous life of Jesus Christ on His generation—the Centurion, &c.

Ver. 10. The *Lord God* had multiplied the people. Their increase was not owing simply to a power in themselves. *God* is the actor.

"As the stars." "A greater number than can be told."—*Clapham Patrick*.

"The Lord our God hath multiplied you."

When Moses said this, it was with the impression that he had said one of the most inspiring and congratulatory things that he could say. Compare Ps. cxxvii. 5. "Happy is the man that has his quiver full." In no way could Moses have expressed his idea of God's beneficence more than this. The subject suggested to us here is the benignity of God. Three facts might well be considered in conjunction with this subject—

I. God's benignity is a fact ever before the eye of man's investigating intellect. Adduce Plato's: "God is beauty and love itself"—an outburst of adoration caused by His purified intellect gazing on the outspread universe in this genial atmosphere and refined light of grace.

What was it but this led Bishop Horne to exclaim, "When we rise fresh and vigorous in the morning, the world seems fresh too, and we think we shall never be tired of business or pleasure; but by the time the evening is come, we find ourselves heartily so; we quit all our enjoyments readily and gladly; we retire willingly into a little cell; we lie down in darkness, and resign ourselves to the arms of sleep with perfect satisfaction and complacency."

Or take again that beautiful passage of Emerson's—



“The method of nature : who could ever analyse it ? That rushing stream will not fail to be observed. We can never surprise nature in a corner ; never find the end of a thread ; never tell where to set the first stone. The bird hastes to lay her egg ; the egg hastens to be a bird. The wholeness we admire in the order of the world is the result of infinite distribution. Its smoothness is the smoothness of the pitch of the cataract. Its permanence is a perpetual inchoation. Every natural fact is an emanation also, and from every emanation is a new emanation. If anything could stand still, it would be crushed and dissipated by the torrent it resisted ; and if it were a mind, would be crazed as insane persons are—those who hold fast one thought, and do not flow with the course of nature ;—not the cause, but an ever-novel effect. Nature descends always from above. It is unbroken obedience. The beauty of these fair objects is imported into them from a metaphysical and eternal spring.”

II. God's benignity is a fact ever impressing our general consciousness. Not only has the intellect its special sphere of observation, of means to end, and adjustment of cause to effect ; but the whole consciousness has that pressing upon it which makes the subject of it cry out in a wild rapture, “God is indeed good !”

III. God's benignity is a fact ever appealing to our faith. What is more startling than to be told that God is good. God is good ! and we think of the earthquake where thirty thousands went into the mystery of the shadows in a moment. The benign God ! and the storm and the shipwreck loom up as some phantom to haunt our peace. We think of widows ; we hear the sob of the orphan. The maiden's love is blasted, and a weary soul goes on its solitary course for years, hoping that there may be a future, and that the spirit of the loved one hovers near.

But God shows His benignity by drawing near in sympathy. Hearts are not left to sigh alone. There is still a voice to be heard when “the thorn” is most painful, “My grace is sufficient.”

It is in this profounder and tenderer way God's benignity constantly appeals unto our heart, and our heart's deepest faith.

Ver. 11. “The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as He hath promised you.”

Subject : The prosperity of Zion desired. Not to exert ourselves for those committed to us argues a want of love for them, but there is a bound to man's power. The care of the people devolving upon Moses proved too much for him. He therefore retired from the *whole* duty, and dealt only with the chief cases, relegating the remainder to magistrates. He had now arrived at the borders of Jordan and the last month of his life, and was enjoined by God to make a farewell memorial ; so the generation immediately coming after him, having the history of their fathers so deeply stamped upon them, might serve God with more fidelity than their fathers had. It was in this farewell he felt called upon to make a reference to the act instigated by Jethro—the appointing of magistrates—lest there might be any feeling on the part of the people at his so doing ; and, to show his zeal in their service, he concludes with this blessing : “The Lord God of your fathers,” &c.

This benevolent wish of his will lead me to consider the prosperity of God's Israel—

1. As a matter of promise. To the promises of God relating to this subject Moses refers : “The Lord bless you, *as He hath promised you !*” God has promised innumerable blessings to those who are of Israel according to the flesh. Cf. Gen. xv. 5 ; Jer. xxxiii. 22 ; Deut. xxx. 5 ; Amos ix. 11–15 ; Zech. viii. 3–8, viii. 13, 18–23 ; Jer. xxx. 19. Innumerable blessings, too, has God promised to His spiritual Israel. That these are included in the wish of Moses there can be no doubt. Cf. Gen. xxii. 17, 18 ; Gal. iii. 7–9, 13, 14.

Let us, then, consider the prosperity of Israel—

II. As an object of desire. “Oh, that

the Lord God of our fathers would multiply His people a thousandfold, and bless them as He hath promised them ! " If any of you need a stimulus to concur in this wish, reflect on—

(1.) The benefit that will accrue to every converted soul.

[Were we to contemplate a soul actually taken out of hell, and translated to a throne of glory in heaven, we should say indeed that such an one had reason to rejoice. Yet, what is it less than this that is done for every child of God? Are we not doomed to perdition? Is there any child of man that is not "by nature a child of wrath"? consequently, if delivered from condemnation, "is he not a brand plucked out of the fire"? Is he not at the very time that he is turned from darkness to light turned also "from the power of Satan unto God"? Does he not actually "pass from death unto life"? And is he not "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son"? Reflect then on this, as done for only one soul, and there is reason, abundant reason, for every benevolent person in the universe to pant for it. But consider it as extended to thousands and millions, yea, millions of millions, even the whole human race, and who should not pant and pray for that? See what commotion is produced in heaven even by the conversion of one soul; for "there is joy among the angels in the very presence of God over one sinner that repenteth." And what must we be who feel so indifferent about the conversion and salvation of the whole world? Verily we have need to blush and be confounded before God for the coldness with which we contemplate His promised blessings.]

(2.) The honour that will redound to God.

[Behold our fallen race! Who is there amongst them that bears any measure of resemblance to the image in which man was created? Who regards God? Who does not practically say to God, "Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways"? But let a soul be apprehended by Divine grace, and converted to the faith of Christ, and what a different aspect does he then bear! Verily, the whole work of creation does not so brightly exhibit the glory of God as does this new created being. Brilliant as are the rays of the noonday sun, they do not display even the natural perfections, and still less the moral perfections of the Deity, as he, the new-born soul, who, from the image of "his father the devil," is transformed into the image of God Himself in "righteousness and true holiness." Now, too, he begins to live unto his God, and by every possible means to exalt His glory in the world, acknowledging Him in all things, serving Him in all things, glorifying Him in all things. Is there a man that is in any respect sensible of his obligations to

God, and not desirous that such converts should be multiplied? Did David "shed rivers of tears for those who kept not God's law," and shall not we weep and pray that such persons may be converted to God and made monuments of His saving grace? But conceive of this whole world that is in rebellion against God converted thus, and God's will done on earth as it is done in heaven; and shall this be to us no object of desire? Verily, we should take no rest to ourselves, nor give any rest to God, till He accomplish this blessed work, and till "all the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of His Christ."]

(3.) The happiness that will arise to the whole world.

[Every soul that is converted to God becomes "as a light" to those around him, and "salt," to keep, as it were, from utter putrefaction the neighbourhood in which he dwells. In proportion, then, as these are multiplied, the very world itself assumes a different aspect. "Instead of the brier there grows up the fir-tree, and instead of the thorn there grows up the myrtle-tree," till at last "the whole wilderness shall blossom as the rose," and this "desert become as the garden of the Lord." I need say no more. The wish of Moses is, I think, the wish of every one amongst you; and you are all saying with David, "Blessed be God's glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory." Amen and amen.]

You will ask, then, What shall we do to accelerate this glorious event? God works by means. Learn a lesson from Moses's act. He received assistance. Let the zeal of the Church be fanned into life. Let the Church help the clergy. Then will God's kingdom come. [Abridged.]—*Simeon*.

Ver. 11. In this book Moses repeats the chief laws to the people. This he does because the generations that first heard them had passed away: a new one was in its place. Much that had taken place he therefore repeats. This led him to refer to their trying and quarrelsome disposition, and the appointment of magistrates to deal with their several cases. The subject, to be considered thoroughly, would afford three ample heads of discourse, viz.:—

I. The *qualifications* required in those that were to be appointed *rulers* over the people. They were to be *wise* men, and understanding, and known among their tribes.

II. The *persons* to whom the *election*

or *choice* is referred, which were the several tribes over whom they were to rule: *Take ye*, or, *give ye*, as it is in the original, *i.e.*, choose ye, as the word signifies.

III. The person who deputed them to their office, and invested them with their authority: and that was Moses himself, their chief leader; he who was appointed over them by God, and under God on earth supreme. "Take ye wise men, &c., and I will make them rulers over you."

The first only is dealt with on this occasion, *i.e.*, this qualification of a ruler. "Choose wise men," &c. In speaking to which I shall—

(1.) Explain the terms in which these qualifications are expressed.

(2.) Show how necessary those qualifications are to form a good magistrate.

(3.) Set forth the great benefits and advantages which such magistrates are—(a.) to their sovereign, (b.) to the people ruled, and (c.) the honour they bring to themselves.—*Condensed from Wheatly on this passage.*

Ver. 11. "The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more than ye are, and bless you, as He hath promised you." There was but one thought on this subject in the mind of both Moses and the Psalmist. "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full:" and, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward." Such a view of a social problem, which is now such a difficult one to some of the most thoughtful, could only be taken by men who had a strong and living faith in the providence of God, and who lived in times and countries where food was more easily procured than it is now in civilised countries, and where the habits of the people were very simple. Still, if men were content to be more simple in habit and life, the same sentiment might be expressed to-day as was sung as a joyful song by Moses and the Psalmist. The words read in such a spirit as characterised these two writers suggest these two considerations—

I. That children ought to be esteemed

blessings, and that he who has a *numerous offspring* ought to be thankful to God for them: for children are the heritage of the Lord.

II. That God is the sole Author and Disposer of these blessings: "The Lord God . . . make, &c., and bless as He hath promised."

I. Children ought to be esteemed blessings, &c. It is a blessed thing to be the parent of a numerous offspring. For

(1.) Such a man is a *public blessing* to the kingdom in which he lives; for the riches of a kingdom consists in the number and multitude of its inhabitants. Cf. the conduct of the Romans, famed for the wisdom of their laws and prudence of politics, which was guided by this maxim from the first foundation of their government, and who endeavoured by all means in their power to augment the numbers of their people, and rather chose to make their city the asylum of the worst of men than want inhabitants. To this end they framed so many honorary laws, and granted so many and great privileges to the parents of many children.

(2.) A numerous offspring is a valuable blessing with respect to *private families*, and that mutual comfort and support which those who came originally out of the same loins yield to one another. These bonds are inseparable when the same interest are bound by natural affection.

(3.) A numerous offspring is a valuable blessing to the *parent himself*. The Jew looked forward to the Messiah being born of his family: the Christian can see a new heir of righteousness. There is joy in their birth: there is pleasure in their after-life if the child is trained aright.

II. God is the sole Author and Disposer of these blessings. Cf. Ps. cxxvii. 3. This blessing is called an heritage. An heritage is an estate got by ancestors, and descends to us lineally without our painstaking. God is our Ancestor, from whom we enjoy all favours.

Three lessons are gathered from the subject of this verse—

(a.) Let those who have no children



learn from hence to wait with patience the Divine pleasure, to continue in prayer and alms-deeds, and to be fruitful in good works; and if they have not children after the flesh, they will have a multitude who will call them blessed, and who in the endless ages of eternity will be to them as children.

(b.) Let those who have a numerous family of children be thankful to God for bestowing these blessings on them, and use their utmost endeavour to make them blessings indeed, by grounding them in the principles of religion and bringing them up soberly and virtuously to some lawful calling.

(c.) Those who have had children and are deprived of them, either by natural death, or, which is worse, by any unfortunate accident, may hence learn to resign themselves to the will of God, and entirely to depend on His good providence.—*Abstract of Sermon by Lewis Atterbury.*

"I know he's coming by this sign,—

That baby's almost wild!

See how he laughs and crows and starts,—

Heaven bless the merry child!

He's father's self in face and limb,

And father's heart is strong in him.

Shout, baby, shout! and clap thy hands,

For father on the threshold stands."

—*Mary Howitt.*

"I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing when they, who are so fresh from God, love us,"—*Dickens.*

"Good Christian people! here lies for you an inestimable loan: take all heed thereof; in all carefulness employ it: with high recompense, or else with heavy penalty, will it one day be required back,"—*Carlyle.*

"Be ever gentle with the children God has given you; watch over them constantly; reprove them earnestly, but not in anger. In the forcible language of Scripture, 'Be not bitter against them.' 'Yes, they are good boys,' I once heard a kind father say. 'I talk to them very much, but do not like to beat my children—the world will beat them.' It was a beautiful thought, though not elegantly expressed. Yes; there is not one child in the circle round the table, healthful and happy as they look now, on whose head, if long enough

spared, the storm will not beat. Adversity may wither them, sickness may fade, a cold world may frown on them, but amidst all, let memory carry them back to a home where the law of kindness reigned, where the mother's reproofing eye was moistened with a tear and the father frowned 'more in sorrow than in anger.'"—*E. Burritt.*

"Call not that man wretched who, whatever ills he suffers, has a child to love,"—*Southey.*

"Of all sights which can soften and humanise the heart of man, there is none that ought so surely to reach it as that of innocent children enjoying the happiness which is their proper and natural portions,"—*Southey.*

"I am fond of children. I think them the poetry of the world, the fresh flowers of our hearths and homes; little conjurors, with their 'natural magic,' evoking by their spells what delights and enriches all ranks and equalises the different classes of society. Often as they bring with them anxieties and cares, and live to occasion sorrow and grief, we should get on very badly without them. Only think if there was never anything anywhere to be seen but great grown-up men and women! How we should long for the sight of a little child! Every infant comes into the world like a delegated prophet, the harbinger and herald of good tidings, whose office it is 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and to draw 'the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.' A child softens and purifies the heart, warming and melting it by its gentle presence; it enriches the soul by new feelings, and awakens within it what is favourable to virtue. It is a beam of light, a fountain of love, a teacher whose lessons few can resist. Infants recall us from much that engenders and encourages selfishness, that freezes the affections, roughens the manners, indurates the heart: they brighten the home, deepen love, invigorate exertion, infuse courage, and vivify and sustain the charities of life. It would be a terrible world, I do think, if it was not embellished by little children,"—*Binney.*

"Unless you court the privacy of the



domestic circle, you will find that you are losing that intimate acquaintance with those who compose it, which is its chief charm and the source of all its advantage. In your family alone can there be that intercourse of heart with heart which falls like refreshing dew on the soul, when it is withered and parched by the heats of business and the intense selfishness which you must hourly meet in public life. Unless your affections are sheltered in that sanctuary, they cannot long resist the blighting influence of a constant repression of their development, and a compulsory substitution of calculation in their stead. Domestic privacy is necessary, not only to your happiness, but even to your efficiency; it gives the rest necessary to your active powers of judgment and discrimination; it keeps unclosed those well-springs of the heart whose flow is necessary to float onwards the determination of the head. It is not enough that the indulgence of these affections should fill up the casual chinks of your time; they must have their allotted portion of it, with which nothing but urgent necessity should be allowed to interfere."—*W. C. Taylor*.

Vers. 10, 11. Moses here beautifully recalls to the nation's mind memories of the past, in which mercies received at the hand of God are very prominent. To this is added a prayer that the future may be as the past, but fuller. In connection with this subject are two thoughts, more or less impressive to various hearers, according to the experience of their lives.

I. Man stands in a continued relation to the past. No moment in the present or future can ever be wholly separated from the past. The feelings indulged in and sentiments expressed yesterday will influence life through all after years. A heart is more closely attached to you or deliberately alienated. Your whole after career will be more or less influenced by that one act.

It is highly necessary, while by each present we are making our past which is so to influence our future, that we consider this. The past becomes a man's life. The present very often is

nothing. It is but the dividing line between that just done and what we are about to do. The past stretches through long years. From it comes all a man's knowledge, feeling, experience. It is his life; we would almost say *himself*. He was made by that past.

II. The past gives form to the hopes and aspirations of the future.

"It is necessary to look forward as well as backward, as some think it always necessary to regulate their conduct by things that have been done of old times; but that past which is so presumptuously brought forward as a precedent for the present, was itself founded on an alteration of some past that went before it."—*Madame de Staël*.

"As the pleasures of the future will be spiritual and pure, the object of a good and wise man in this transitory state of existence should be to fit himself for a better by controlling the unworthy propensities of his nature and improving all his better aspirations, to do his duty, first to God, then to his neighbour; to promote the happiness and welfare of those who are dependent upon him, or whom he has the means of assisting; never wantonly to injure the meanest thing that lives; to encourage, as far as he may have the power, whatever is useful and tends to refine and exalt humanity; to store his mind with such knowledge as it is fitted to receive and he is able to attain; and so to employ the talents committed to his care that, when the account is required, he may hope to have the stewardship approved."—*Southey*.

On the knowledge of the past we reason for the future. From the past comes experience. Experience tells what is *good*. That a wise man desires.

Ver. 12. Moses found the work too much for himself alone, he therefore sought assistance. This is but a local application of the principle laid down in Genesis: "It is not good that man should be alone." Man for the most part needs help, sympathy, and encouragement in his work. A few proud natures wander lion-like, alone through

the world ; but their life is hard, unnatural, solitary. "The solitary," God has taken and "set in families."

"Hear your complaints, remedy your grievances, determine your controversies."—*Clapham*.

Ver. 12. "How can I bear you alone?" The anguish cry of the fathers has provided language for the children. The sufferings of one age have provided the vehicle of expression for the sufferings of the next. Thus Moses in this moment of trial has done a service for after-ages. Two lessons—

I. The most honoured men are put into situations of extreme difficulty and suffering.

II. Great faith has great trials.

"Examination and trial of a good scholar hurts him not, either in his learning or in his credit ; nay, it advances him much in both ; his very examination rubs up his learning, puts much upon him, and sends him away with the approbation of others. And thus in the trial of faith there is an exercise of faith ; faith examined and tried prove a faith strengthened and increased. Some things sometimes prove the worse, and suffer loss by trial ; but the more faith is tried the more faith is enlarged."—*Things New and Old*.

Ver. 12. "How can I bear you alone?" The interrogative form of statement is sometimes the most emphatic mode of statement. Moses does not distinctly state that he was severely tried. But his words imply that much. The words of Moses are echoed by a million hearts, who are crying, How shall I bear *this* burden, *this* circumstance, *this* strife, *this* loss, *this* sorrow?

I. Trial is the heritage of every life.

"Trials *must* and will befall."

All would gladly flee them. It is impossible. The necessity of life, and still more of growth in spiritual life, is trial.

II. Distinguish between *trial* and the effect of transgression. They may both be forms of suffering ; indeed, the same form. They may tend to have the same effect upon our spirit, "of life

unto life or death unto death ;" but there is this vital difference—the one can be escaped, avoided ; the other cannot. A man can avoid losing his friend by his own temper : he cannot at all times restrain the whim and temper of his friend, which also rob him of hallowed friendship. Trials come from without : the effects of our transgressions from within. By care, grace, self-restraint, many of the so-called trials of life might be lessened, for the majority are only the effects of transgression of some kind, and rest entirely with ourselves.

III. Though there may be real trials from without which we cannot avert, and though much of the suffering which we endure might be averted, and the causes lie in ourselves, still the whole may be cheerfully met, and received as a discipline at the hand of God ; for suffering of all kind, no matter whence the cause, if permitted to have the right effect, tends to chasten and purify the spirit.

IV. In trials of all kinds, whether they come through the body in the guise of pain, or whether they directly attack the emotions dressed as anguish, the most efficacious way of dealing with them is a humble and prayerful committal of ourselves to the care and providence of God.

V. Prayer for help, trust in God, the hope of either removal or supporting grace according to the trial, is the true way to commit ourselves to God. To fret only wears out. Complaint embitters. Resignation to the Divine will, memories of brighter pasts, hopes of happier futures, enweave around the storms of life a halo of light and glory given by the Sun of Righteousness, Himself shining from where we cannot see Him.

Ver. 13. "Bring ye unto me wise and understanding men, and esteemed throughout your tribes."—*Delgado*.

"Known among their tribes." Their several tribes were to approve of them and to vouch for their character. These were in this respect a sort of figure of the College of Bishops, of whose ordina-

tion, St. Cyprian tells us, such care was and ought to be taken, that it was a great irregularity and omission in their ordination if the neighbouring Bishops of the province did not come together to the people of the diocese over which the Bishop to be ordained was to preside, and if he was not elected in the presence of the people, as who should be perfectly well acquainted with his whole life and conversation (Ep. lxvii. 172). See Origen, Comm. on Lev. viii. 5, quoted in *Bib. Bib.*

In Deut. i. 9-13, Moses is represented as having proposed the appointment of these judges to the people himself, which, it is said in the text, was suggested and proposed to him by his father-in-law, Jethro—a circumstance which has been considered as involving a considerable difficulty. One would almost think that the way in which we have stated the fact was in itself enough to show that there is in reality no discrepancy between the two passages; but to avoid all misconception of the matter, we transcribe the following from Dr. Greaves:—

“There is a great and striking difference between those statements, but there is no contradiction. Jethro suggested to Moses the appointment; he probably, after consulting God, as Jethro intimates, ‘If God shall thus command thee’ (ver. 23), referred the whole matter to the people, and assigned the choice of individuals to them. The persons thus selected he admitted to share his authority as subordinate judges. Thus the two statements are perfectly consistent. But this is not all: their difference is most natural. In first recording the event, it was natural Moses should dwell on the first cause which led to it, and pass by the appeal to the people as a subordinate and less material part of the transaction; but in addressing the people, it was natural to notice the part they themselves had in the selection of those judges, in order to conciliate their regard and obedience. How naturally, also, does the pious legislator, in his public address, dwell on every circumstance which could improve

his hearers in piety and virtue! The multitude of the people was the cause of the appointment of the judges; how beautifully is this increase of the nation turned to an argument of gratitude to God! How affectionate is the blessing with which the pious speaker interrupts the narrative, imploring God that the multitude of the people may increase a thousandfold! How admirably does he take occasion, from mentioning the judges, to inculcate the eternal principles of justice and piety, which should control their decisions! How remote is all this from art, forgery, and imposture! Surely here, if anywhere, we can trace the dictates of nature, truth, and piety.”—*Carpenter, An Examination of Scrip. Diff.*

“Wise men.” “Rulers’ actions exemplary. If the mountains overflow with water, the valleys are the better; and if the head be full of ill humours, the whole body fares the worse. The actions of rulers are most commonly rules for the people’s actions, and their example passeth as current as their coin. If a peasant meet luxury in a scarlet robe, he dares be such, having so fair a cloak for it. The common people are like tempered wax, easily receiving impressions from the seals of great men’s vices; they care not to sin by prescription, and damn themselves with authority. And it is the unhappy privilege of greatness to warrant by example as well others’ as its own sins; whilst the unadvised vulgar take up crimes on trust and perish by credit.”—*Things New and Old.*

“Known.” “Public men must have public spirit. Plutarch records an excellent speech of Pelopidas when going out of his house to the wars; his wife came to take her leave of him, and with tears in her eyes prays him to look to himself. ‘O my good wife!’ said he, ‘it is for private soldiers to be careful of themselves, not for those in public place; they must have an eye to save other men’s lives.’ Such a spirit becomes every man in public place; flesh and blood will be apt to prompt a man that it is good to sleep in a whole skin: why should a man hazard himself and bring himself



into danger? But let such know that men in public places are to have public spirits, and to take notice that though there be more danger by standing in the gap than getting behind the hedge, yet it is best to be where God looks for them to be."—*Things New and Old*.

"Get you wise men," &c. Moses was not unwilling to share his honours with others. He is an old man. Much of the ambition of youth is dying out. The pressure of anxiety and care is great. With the justice characteristic of his noble nature he did not ask men to share his labours without sharing his honours. A few homiletical points are—

I. No unworthy or selfish ambition to be cherished. Share your honour with those who divide with you your care and toil. How different would many a wife's life have been had all husbands been governed by this principle! Both the rich and the poor daily give us examples. Too many arise like him of whom Milton says—

"One shall rise

Of proud ambitious heart, who, not content  
With fair equality, fraternal state,  
Will arrogate dominion undeserved  
Over his brethren, and quite dispossess  
Concord and law of nature from the earth."

II. Contrast with this picture the action of Moses. No merely nominal superiority to be coveted. Position may be had sometimes by theft. Thrones are sometimes stolen as well as trinkets from a lady's table. Place is sometimes gained by flattery. But what is such nominal superiority? True position is power.

"The true ambition there alone resides  
Where justice vindicates and wisdom guides,  
Where inward dignity joins outward state,  
Our purpose good, as our achievement great;  
Where public blessings public praise attend,  
Where glory is our motive and our end:  
Would'st thou be famed? Have those high  
acts in view  
Brave men would act though scandal would  
ensue."  
—*Young*.

Position of every kind is always a tacit acknowledgment of willingness for service, for the possessor of place is ever proclaiming his power to work. And as soon as a man cannot work it is

his duty to retire from office. Moses shows his true manhood in his act. He spurned *nominal* superiority. He preferred abdication, which his act virtually is, to holding of the reins of steeds of which he no longer had control.

III. The most actively fraternal spirit to be cultivated. Sir Walter Scott ably and earnestly advocated this principle when he said, "The race of mankind would perish did they cease to aid each other. From the time that the mother binds the child's head, till the moment that some kind assistant wipes the death-damp from the brow of the dying, we cannot exist without mutual help. All, therefore, that need aid have a right to ask it from their fellow-mortals; no one who holds the power of granting can refuse it without guilt."

"A happy bit hame this auld world would be  
If men when they're here could mak' shift  
to agree,  
An' ilk said to his neighbour, in cottage  
an' ha',  
'Come, gi'e me your hand—we be brethren a'.

I ken na why ane wi' anither should fight,  
When to 'gree would make a' body cosie  
an' right;  
When man meets wi' man, 'tis the best way  
ava  
To say, 'Gi'e me your hand—we are breth-  
ren a'."  
—*Robert Nicol*.

IV. This spirit easily cultivated by those who walk with God as Moses did. The secret of every truly great life lies in that fact, "He walked with God." Enoch needed not to see death, for he walked with God. Those who walk with God have God dwelling in them." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17). "Secret things belong unto the Lord," said the author of Deuteronomy; to which the Psalmist is able to add, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." God lights that subtle fire in the heart of the believer by the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that all the dross of evil is consumed away and the pure gold of Being alone left. Moses was one of those long in the furnace of affliction. And beautiful

was he when the snows of a hundred and twenty winters whitened his head. By the same process, by the same spirit, by the same cultivation, may men to-day become as the man Moses was some five and thirty centuries ago.

*Ambition proves its own ruin.* "The poisonous aconite, so much desired of the panther, is purposely hung up by the hunters in vessels above their reach, whereof they are so greedy, that they never leave leaping and straining thereat till they burst and kill themselves, and so are taken. Thus do men aim at honour and greatness too high for their reach, and too great oftentimes for their merit; for an ambitious heart overgrown with this rank aconite neither admits of the beams of grace to mollify its hardness nor the bounds of nature to restrain the swelling; but is unnaturally carried to wrong those of his own blood that are living, and to blemish the honourable fame of his predecessors that are departed. Such tyrants may bear themselves up for a time, but in the end they shall find that, though Divine justice hath leaden feet, she hath iron hands; though slow in coming, yet she strikes home."—*Sir R. Dallington.*

*The poisonous nature of ambition.* "As poison is of such force that it corrupteth both blood and spirit, besieging, seizing, and infecting the heart with venomous contagion thereof, quite altering the complexion and condition of the man that hath drunk it, so the pestiferous desire of sovereignty, though it seize on a mind of mild and mansuet disposition, yet it is of such forcible operation, as it not only altereth man's nature, but maketh man unnatural."—*Sir R. Dallington.*

Ver. 15. Cf. "Critical Notes."

"Chief of your tribes." "They were the fitter for this high employment because men of quality. They were less liable to be corrupted by bribery, from which Moses took such care that all judges should be so free that he expressly required they should be men *hating* covetousness (Exod. xviii. 21)." —*Bibliotheca Biblica.*

In the oath administered to judges, Solon put in a special clause to prevent bribery, which is quoted in Demosthenes' oration against Timocrates. "I will receive no gift upon the account of my sentence: neither I myself, nor anybody else for me; nor another with my knowledge, by any artifice or devise whatsoever."—*Vide Patrick on Pass.*

"Officers." שְׁטָרִים, *Shotérím*, cf. "Biblical Treasury," vol. i. p. 158, a long note found in Michaelis on *Shotérím*.

*Shotérím*, one set over a thing, an overseer, arranger, administrator, mentioned with judges, Deut. xvi. 18, with elders, Deut. xxxi. 28, with elders and judges, Jos. viii. 33, with elders, judges, and heads, Jos. xxiii. 2, with guide and ruler, Prov. vi. 7. They were chosen from people, Num. xi. 16. They had to make commands known to the people, Jos. i. 10. To conduct the levies of soldiers, Deut. xx. 5. They were officers in cities, 1 Chron. xxiii. 4, xxvi. 29; sometimes filled higher dignities, 2 Chron. xxvi. 11. They also regulated affairs in the camp, Josh. viii. 33. The translation γαμμα-*τα*, scribe, LXX. *sofro*, Syr., does not suit.—*Fürst's Lex.*

"Wise men and known"—in other words, true men. Two kinds of men in the world. Men of the world—imitations of the true thing, counterfeits of immortality; and *true* men—men full of the spirit of wisdom, full of the Holy Ghost, Acts ii. 4, iv. 8, vi. 3, vii. 55, xi. 24, &c.—known men—men known of God and man; known of God because of the *truth* of their life; known of men because of the *power* of their life—men of Christ.

I. *Men of the world.* These follow the course of expediency. They adopt a corrupt worldly religion. Their God is a golden calf. They worship prosperity, know only what is seen, drop the unfortunate, are entirely ignorant of the religious principles taught by James (cf. James i. 27). Widows, poor, afflicted, unfortunate, too troublesome, too expensive.

II. *Men of Christ.* What a contrast these men present! As different as Hezekiah and Manasseh. These true men of Christ have distinctive principles

in their life. Conduct governed by the law of their Master (Matt. v. 44; John xv. 12; Luke vi. 31).

(a.) These men will eventually succeed (1 Sam. ii. 30).

(b.) These men always strong (Jer. i. 34; Matt. xxviii. 20).

(c.) Though such have their season of gloom, a light yet arises on their path.

“ Sometimes a light surprises  
The Christian while he sings :  
It is the Lord, who rises  
With healing in His wings.”

—Cowper.

*Magistrates to be men of understanding.* Heraclitus being sick, examined his physician concerning the cause of his sickness; but finding that he was ignorant thereof, he would take none of his physic, saying, “If he be not able to show me the cause, he is less able to take away the cause of my disease.” Thus there are many sores and sicknesses in a commonwealth, a thousand ways of cheating. The generality of men is, as Ovid said of Autolycus, “*furtum ingeniosus ad omne*,” witty in all kinds of wickedness; indeed the world is set upon wickedness (1 John v. 19). And such is the subtilty, too, of offenders, that the trim tale of Tertullus (Acts xxiv.) goes current till the Apostle comes after him and unstarches it. How easy is a fair glove drawn upon a foul hand, —a bad cause smoothed over with goodly pretences! So cunning, so wary, and so wise are the many, that, as Cæsar said of the Scythians, it is harder to find them than to foil them; like the cuttlefish, they can hide themselves in their own ink-floods, they cover themselves with their own devices. The magistrate, that physician of the body politic, had need of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that he may keep that one ear open for the innocent, whether plaintiff or defendant: he must be a man of experience, industry, and judgment to catch all the guilty with the hook of justice, who are crafty and slippery to avoid them, that he may be able to put away the very causes of corruption.

*Magistrates must be examples.* It is said in the praise of Moses that he

was a mighty man both in word and deed (Acts vii. 22); not mighty in word only, as many governors are, to command strongly, but mighty also in deed, to do it accordingly. As Tully reports of Julius Cæsar that he was never heard saying to his soldiers *Ite illuc*, “Go ye thither,” as if they should go into service and he stay behind in the tent; but *Venite huc*, “Come hither; let us give the onset, and adventure our lives together;” a great encouragement for the soldier to follow when he sees his captain march before! Thus it is that if the magistrate will persuade the people to anything, he must show the experience of it first in himself; or if he will command the people anything, he must do it first himself and by himself; otherwise, if he exact one thing, and do another, it will be said that he is like a waterman, who rows one way and looks another. (Cf. Sermon preached 1622, before Prince Charles at St. James’s.)

“*Made them heads.*” “A good magistrate or minister is the support of the place where he lives. Men use to fence and defend, to keep watch and ward over their cornfields whilst the corn and fruit are in them unreaped, ungathered; but when the corn is in and safe in the barn, then is open-tide, as they say; they lay all open, throw in the fence, and let in beasts of all kind; nay, sometimes they set fire on the stubble. Thus every zealous magistrate, every godly minister, every good Christian is, as it were, a fence, a hedge to that place, that parish where they live; and when they are once plucked up, when they are taken away by death, or otherwise removed, that kingdom, that place, that parish lies open to all manner of ruin and destruction.”—*Things New and Old.*

Vers. 9–15. This appointment of the “captains” (cf. Exod. xviii. 21 sqq.) must not be confounded with that of the elders in Num. xi. 16 sqq. The former would number 78,600; the latter were seventy only. The time and place, and indeed the transactions themselves, were quite different. The



only common point between the two lies in the complaint of Moses, ver. 12, which bears some verbal resemblance to Num. xi. 14-17. But, as in both cases, the grievance Moses had was of the same kind, there is no reason why he should not express it in the like terms. It is, in fact, a characteristic of the speech of early times, and one exemplified in every ancient record, to employ the same or similar combinations of words for like occasions, instead of inventing new combinations for each. Such similarities afford no proof whatever of the writers having other like passages in view. Very ancient languages had not that variety and flexibility of expression which belongs to the modern languages of Western Europe.

"It has been observed that in Exodus the appointment of the captains is described as made before the giving of the law at Sinai; here it seems to be placed immediately before the people departed from Horeb, *i.e.*, a year later. But it is obvious that Moses is only touching on certain parts of the whole history, and with a special purpose. God had given them a promise, and willed them to enter on the enjoyment of it. Moses too had done his part, and had provided for the good government and organisation of their greatly increased multitude. All was ready for the full accomplishment of the promises before the camp broke up from Horeb. The order of statement is here rather suggested by the purposes of the speaker than by the facts. But it is nevertheless quite correct in the main point, which is that this important arrangement for the good government of the people took place before they quitted Horeb to march direct to the Promised Land. This fact sets more clearly before us the perverseness and ingratitude of the people, to which the orator next passes, and shows, what he was anxious to impress, that the fault of the forty years' delay rested only with themselves."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Ver. 16. A good charge. Those that are advanced to honour must know that they are charged with business, and

must give account another day of their charge.

I. He charges them to be *diligent and patient*. "Hear the causes." Hear both sides, here them fully, hear them carefully; for nature has provided us with two ears, and he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him. The ear of the learner is necessary to the tongue of the learned (Isa. l. 4).

II. To be *just and impartial*. "Judge righteously." Judgment must be given according to the merits of the case, without regard to the qualities of the parties. The native must not be suffered to abuse the stranger, nor the great the small. No faces known in judgment.

III. To be *resolute and courageous*. "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man." Be not overawed to do an ill thing, either by the clamours of the crowd or by the menaces of those possessing power.

IV. He gave a good reason to enforce this charge. "The judgment is God's." You act for God—act like Him. His representatives, if you judge unrighteously you misrepresent Him. —*M. Henry*.

*Cf.* Solon's oath. "I will hear the accuser and the defender both alike."—*Quoted by Patrick*.

Ver. 16. "As their person and endowments made them considerable, they were therefore designated with the honourable title Schofetim "(Shoph'tim)" and were also called Elders, a title of honour among the Jews and other nations."—*Patrick*.

*Cf.* Alderman = Elderman.

Vers. 15, 16. Subject: Organisation.

There is nothing clearer in history than that men stand in relation to one another of superior and inferior. That very fact necessitates gradations of position; all cannot be first, all cannot be last. The point to be determined is every man's faculty, and his adaptation for a particular sphere. The narrative before us provides us with the abstract

principle concreted into a tangible form. Moses—chiefs of tribes—captains—officers.

Society could not exist without organisation. Organisation would break up without leaders (*cf.* various epochs in history when society has been shattered for want of able leaders). Natural history as well as the history of humanity enforces this truth. The bee has its queen; a flock of sheep, a herd of deer their leader.

Three things about true leaders—

I. They must be chosen of God. Moses was thus appointed; so Joshua. These subordinate rulers were chosen by the same, though in a subordinate manner. Moses as God's vicegerent selected them from those who had God's stamp upon them—ability and acknowledged position. To him that has shall be given.

II. Being chosen by God, they must walk according to the Divine counsels. "The book of the law of the Lord shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous," &c. (Josh. i. 8). God never endows man with independence. He is raised high, but is ever subject to God. It was because Satan overlooked this, according to our great poet, that he fell from his high estate. However that may be, man quickly learns that he who lives without God soon finds that God can live without him.

III. In proportion as leaders acknowledge God, so He prospers them (*cf.* Josh. i. 8); "for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." "They that honour Me will I honour."

Four thoughts on organisation—

I. Organisation facilitates the development of individual talent.

II. Organisation consolidates Christian society assembled in one place.

III. Organisation presents most formidable front to the enemy.

IV. Organisation promotes healthful spiritual development.—*Dr. Parker.*

"Judge righteously." It was a shame

for Cæsar to confess, "*Melior causa Cassii, sed denegare Bruto nihil possum*" (The case of Cassius was the better, but I am unable to deny Brutus anything); and Henry the Emperor (the seventh of that name) is much taxed in story for that, being appealed unto by a couple of lawyers, who contended about the sovereignty of the empire, they first making agreement betwixt themselves that he for whom the Emperor should give sentence should win a horse of his fellow-lawyer: now the Emperor fairly pronounced truth to be on his side that spake most for his power and authority, whereupon this proverb was taken up, "*Alter respondet æquum, sed alter habet equum*" (The one hath the right on his side, but the other rides the horse). Thus it is that partiality perverteth right and corrupteth judgment, whereas the law is plain. "You shall have no respect of person in judgment," &c. And the Apostle's charge unto Timothy is, that he do nothing *κατὰ πρόκλησιν*, by tilting the balance on one side.

*Magistrates should be men of courage.*

"Elvidius Priscus, being commanded by Vespasian either not to come into the senate, or being there, to speak nothing but what he directed, made answer, that being a senator, it was fit he should go into the senate; and being there, it was his duty to speak in his conscience what he thought to be true; and then being threatened, if he did so, he should die, further added, "That he never as yet told him that he was immortal; and therefore," said he, "do what you will, I will do what I ought; and as it is in your power to put me unjustly to death, so it is in my power to die resolvedly for the truth." Here now was a brave-spirited heathen, fit for Christian imitation; for he can never be a faithful man that is afraid to speak his mind. Men of public employment for the people's good must and ought to stand up for the truth, to be men of courage, men of resolution, not fearing the frown of any whatsoever; not echoing out the dictates of others, but freely speaking their own thoughts without any fear at all."—*Things New and Old.*

*Magistrates to be impartial in justice.* Selucus, that impartial lawgiver of the Locrians, made a law against adulterers, that whosoever should be found guilty thereof should have his eyes put out. It so happened that his son proved the first offender. Sentence was pronounced, execution ready to be done; whereupon the people earnestly entreated the judge his father that he would pardon the fact, who, upon serious deliberation, put out one of his own eyes and one of his son's, and so showed himself a godly father and an upright judge together. Thus it is that magistrates, like the earth, should be immovable, though the winds should blow at once from all points of the compass; not to favour friends, nor fear the frowns of enemies, but to proceed impartially according to the merits of the cause that is before them (Prov. xviii. 5).

Ver. 17. *Duty of magistrates.* Part of Moses's solemn charge to the judges of Israel. Jehoshaphat in substance said the same (cf. 2 Chron. xix. 6). Charge was necessary then—now—as long as men are subject to weakness, negligence, corruption, or passion. The words imply—

I. The judgment is God's.

II. Ye shall not fear man.

III. The subject may see the sin and danger of opposing, disobeying, and vilifying magistrates.—*T. Wilson.*

Ver. 17. *The authority of magistrates.* "For the judgment is God's." Moses here enforces the charge given to the judges of Israel. He repeats (cf. Lev. xix. 15) it to procure reverence for the judges, and to encourage the judges to be fearless. Moses had done as much as he was able to procure the faithful execution of so high a trust: he "took the chief of the tribes, wise men" (cf. ver. 15). To the natural character of the men he adds the support of a good reason why they should do what was right: "The judgment is God's." First they derive authority from Him, the fountain of power (cf. Prov. viii. 15); secondly, they judge in His cause, and

assert the honour of Him that loveth righteousness" (cf. Ps. xi. 7). Work of righteous judgment—dividing between good and evil, subduing the violent, detecting villainy, punishing the guilty, shielding the innocent, restraining the vindictive, protesting against all flattery. Considering that the judgment is God's, it becomes imperative that we do right. Two lines of thought—

I. What regard is due to the person that judges for God.

II. What obligations are laid upon him.

Ver. 17. Those who act for God as His vicegerents must act like Him. He will protect them in doing right, and call them to account if they do wrong.—*Tract Soc. Com.*

"Be not afraid of any man."—*Delgado.*

"He shall not respect persons." "Not look to the face," &c. Cf. *Crit. Notes.* Cf. also the ancient custom of painting and sculpturing Justice with her eyes veiled.—*Bib. Bib.*

The Thebans painted their magistrates without hands, and the chief of them without eyes, to put them in mind that they were not in any degree to be swayed by favour or bribe.—*Bib. Bib.*

Cf. Homer's description of Ulysses, Od. 4.

"Ulysses let no partial favours fall;  
The people's parent, he protected all."

—*Pope's Homer.*

"Ye shall hear small as well as great."  
"Be equally disposed patiently to attend to the cause of a poor man as of a great, and to do him as speedy and impartial justice. (See Lev. xix. 15.) And here the Hebrew doctors tell us of some singular practices in their courts to preserve the dispensation of exact justice; for if one of the contending parties came into them richly clothed and the other poorly, they would not hear him till both were clothed alike. Nor would they suffer one of them to sit and the other to stand, but both of them either sat or stood. And if they sat, one of them was not permitted to sit higher than the other, but they sat by each other's side."—*Patrick.*



"Courage and undaunted resolution are altogether necessary qualities for a judge."—*Patrick*.

Ver. 17. In this verse, in a most undisguised manner, we have most emphatically enforced a social virtue—justice. God never taught that religion might be divorced from morality. When Moses spake *thus*: when the author of the Proverbs says—"A false balance is an abomination to the Lord:" Isaiah—"Thus saith the Lord, Keep judgment and do justice, for My salvation is near to come and My righteousness to be revealed:" Amos—"Let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream:" Jeremiah—"He judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him: was not this to *know Me*? saith the Lord" (*cf.* the endorsement of Jesus across these passages, Matt. v. 17-20): Paul—(Rom. ii. 13; Phil. iv. 8; Col. iv. 1; Rom. vi. 1): and James—"Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, . . . to keep one's self unspotted from the world," &c. &c., to chap. ii. 10: we have, from Moses to James, divinely inspired men proclaiming there is no divorce between religion and morality; and to the man who pretends to a religious life while he ignores moral and social duties let there be but the one word—"What God has joined together let no man put asunder."

In the fulness of this verse we have the various steps of injustice referred to; and placed in startling juxtaposition is a fact that should be as a barrier to obstruct all such evil courses. Let us observe—

I. That the first step towards evil is a playing with it in our own mind. The inspired penman knew what he was saying when he warned against "*respecting*." What is admired is loved—is imitated. The mind silently is brought into harmony with it. What was it the young man did whose later life was marked with some of the most terrible vices of manhood? It was so simple a thing as yielding to impure thought—permitting unchaste images to take a lodgment in his fancy. How was it that the young woman whose life was

darkened with scenes no woman should have beheld took the first step? Was it not by respecting certain friends whom she ought not to have respected? The voice of the charmer should have been recognised. In her own thoughts she cherished him.

II. We cannot indulge in the thought without its becoming incarnate in some form, which is action. Moses knew that men could not rest content with simply respecting. If the great were respected the small would be ignored: indeed, not only would the small be ignored, there was a danger of their being silenced in their pleadings, and justice, which was their right, being taken from them. In like manner we cannot afford for a moment to think evil of God. If we give place to such a thought, the mind takes an attitude which soon becomes open rebellion.

III. We cannot play with evil without enervating our moral nature. The man who respects the great and ignores his duties to the small loses the "fear of God," and in its place enthrones the fear of man. "Ye shall not stand in awe of the face of man."

IV. The barrier that God would raise up around every man to restrain his feet from wandering is the *fact* of His presence—His sovereignty: "The judgment is God's." The most impressive comment that can be offered here is what was spoken to Saul on the way to Damascus: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Ver. 17. This is part of a *solemn charge* which Moses gave to the judges of Israel. The same in effect did Jehoshaphat give to his judges (2 Chron. xix. 6). If such was necessary then, it is *now*, and will be as long as men shall be as they now are—subject to weakness, negligence, corruption, passion. The words of the text suppose this. The words, though few, imply much instruction.

I. "The judgment is God's." Why, then, the magistrate's power and authority is from God.

II. "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man." This teaches the magistrate



his duty, *i.e.*, that he is not to pervert justice for any worldly consideration; no, not for the fear of death.

III. The subject may here see the sin and danger of opposing, of disobeying, of vilifying the magistrate in the due execution of his office. He is God's minister; his judgment, if just, is the very judgment of God; God is with him in judgment, and will certainly avenge him if he is despised.—*T. Wilson's Sermons.*

Ver. 17. "The judgment is God's."

In these words Moses enforces that solemn charge which he gave to the judges. He repeats it to procure veneration for their *character*, to remind them of their own *dignity*, to raise them above the power of *fear*, *prejudice*, and *interest*. Here was a forcible reason for faithfulness in executing their high trust. Their authority was from God; the work was God's. It concerns the judge to know whose authority he has that he may be *righteous*: it concerns the people that they may be *obedient*. I shall therefore show—

I. What regard is due to the persons that judge for God.

(a.) They are to be treated with tender regard.

(b.) The nature of their office requires more than ordinary veneration; for unless we preserve a just notion of the sacred authority that is vested in the ministers of judgment, they will scarcely be a terror to evil-doers—they will bear the sword in vain.

(c.) For the sake of those in public station we should endeavour to suppress all pernicious principles.

II. What obligations are laid upon them.

(a.) No sordid hopes of advantage, no fear, partiality, or pity, must be allowed to pervert.

(b.) "Let no man despise you." You must retain a just value of yourselves and support your character.

(c.) Judges must check vice.

(d.) Justice and mercy should go hand in hand.—*T. Newlin.*

Vers. 16, 17. "I charged," &c. The parts of this charge are—

I. Patience to hear causes.

II. Justice in judging righteously (John vii. 24).

III. Courage (Lev. xix. 15; Deut. xvi. 19; 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Prov. xiv. 23).

IV. Prudence. The cause too hard you bring to me.—*Kiddler.*

Vers. 16, 17. Subject: Not to abuse entrusted power. All power is entrusted. Though men apparently make their own position in the world, yet what they acquire is in accordance with ability given by God. We have many cases of abused power. Achan is an instance. He had the power of serving God by destroying what he found. He kept it. Power abused. Herod is another instance of one who abused power.

I. Power may be abused by not using it at all. *Cf.* Saul with Agag.

II. Power may be abused by using it in a wrong direction. Herod (*cf.* Matt. xiv. 1-13). Here is an example of power used in a wrong direction.

(a.) It injured his own moral nature.

(b.) It encouraged others to wrong.

(c.) It brought injury to the upright.

In warning the judges against the abuse of power, Moses thought of all this and much more.

Ver. 19. "That great and terrible wilderness" (*cf.* viii. 15). This language is by no means applicable to the whole peninsula of Sinai, even in its present deteriorated state. It is, however, quite such as men would employ after having passed with toil and suffering through the worst parts of it, the southern half of the Arabah; and more especially when they had but recently rested from their marches in the plain of Shittim, the largest and richest oasis in the whole district.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

"The Divine blessing has not bestowed the same degree of fruitfulness on every part of Caanan. This fertile country is surrounded by deserts of immense extent, exhibiting a dreary waste of loose and barren sand, on which the skill and industry of man are able to make no impression. The only vegetable production which occasionally meets the

eye of the traveller in these frightful solitudes are a coarse sickly grass thinly sprinkled on the sand, a plot of senna or other saline or bitter herb, or an occasional acacia bush. Even these but rarely present themselves to his notice, and afford him but little satisfaction when they do, because they warn him that he is far distant from a place of abundance and repose. Moses, who knew these deserts well, calls them 'great' and 'terrible,' 'a desert land,' the 'waste howling wilderness.' But the completest picture of the sandy desert is drawn by the pencil of Jeremiah, in which, with surprising force and beauty, he has exhibited every circumstance of terror which the modern traveller details with so much pathos and minuteness—'Neither say they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of droughts and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passeth through, and where no man dwelt.'—*Paxton*.

"That great and terrible wilderness." To those familiar with the reality of which the seen and temporal are but shadows, these words are very suggestive of another desert, and the way by which God's people travel through it. Souls are born in a spiritual Egypt. Life is a kind of desert wandering of trial, "great," "terrible" at times. But there *is* a way through it; for unto the redeemed One has said in the heart's mystic silence, "I am the Way:" "Lo! I am with you."

I. The way of the redeemed.

- (1.) Long.
- (2.) Difficult.
- (3.) Sometimes apparently lonely.
- (4.) A desert way.

II. The rectitude of that way. It is a right way, for

- (1.) It is the Divine way. God led them along it by a cloud and fire.
- (2.) It is the way to the promised reward.

*Salt deserts.* In traversing the region between Egypt and Gluzzeh, the Gaza of the Bible, my course, during most of the forenoon, lay through a suc-

cession of basins or valleys, where the surface of the ground was moist, and covered with a thin incrustation of salt. It was so slippery here that the camels could with difficulty keep erect; one of them actually fell at full length with a groan which it was piteous to hear. We were not far at this time from the Mediterranean, of which we had glimpses now and then. It is quite possible that a strong wind from the west causes the sea occasionally to overflow the entire tract, and on its receding, the water left in the low places evaporates and encrusts the earth with salt. There are other deserts, or parts of deserts, in the East, as travellers inform us, which present a similar peculiarity, though the salt may be formed, in those cases, in a different manner. Perhaps the most remarkable among these is the region south of the Dead Sea. A soil of this nature must, of course, be unproductive. Nothing grows there, and the means of supporting life are wanting. It may be to this feature of an Eastern desert, aggravating so much its other evils, and rendering it unfit to be the abode of men, that the prophet Jeremiah refers when he says of the ungodly man, "He shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."—*Professor Hackett*.

*The deserts.* "Few who have not visited Eastern lands can form any adequate idea of the nature of a desert. In those wide-spread plains the hand of man is powerless. Nature holds sway as on the morning of creation; in primeval wildness she displays her terrors and her magnificence, and art and science sink down helpless and appalled before the barriers which she has erected. As the traveller recedes from the habitation of man, and the tokens of civilisation begin to disappear, the scene becomes wilder and more desolate; a few stunted patches of parched and scanty herbage here and there meet the eye; vast blocks of stone are scattered over the sand; no cooling streams, no refreshing groves, break the monotony of the prospect; the sun pours down a flood of burning and dazzling light, and the distant mountains glow in the hot

and dusky horizon. The strength of man seems to melt away within him, and the camel, 'the ship of the desert,' paces onward with languid step. By night the piercing winds are scarcely less endurable than the heat by day. The mountainous portions of the desert afford some of the most awfully sublime scenery that the world can exhibit; and here the terrors of the plains are mitigated by shade and water. Such was the wilderness where the children of Israel wandered for forty years."—*H. Christmas.*

Ver. 21. The journeyings of the Israelites in the wilderness afford an inexhaustible fund of instruction to us. The history of their deliverance from Egypt, their trials and supports, and their final entrance into the land of Canaan, so exactly corresponds with the experience of believers in their journey heavenward, that we are never at a loss for an illustration of that which is invisible from that which actually took place amongst God's ancient people.

The Israelites, after one year spent in the wilderness, were now arrived on the very confines of Canaan, and the exhortation which I have now read to you was part of the address of Moses to them encouraging them to go up and take possession of the land. And assuming (what I need not now stand to prove) the justness of the parallel between their state and ours, the words before us contain—

I. The command given us in reference to the Promised Land. There is for us, as there was for Israel, "a rest" prepared (Heb. iv. 8, 9), and we are bidden to take possession of it.

(1.) By right, as the gift of God.

[Canaan was given to Abraham and his seed by God Himself. God had a right to give it to whom He would. The former possessors were but tenants at will; if God saw fit to dispossess them, no wrong done them. This is said to satisfy the mind of those who feel repugnance to the transfer of the land from the Canaanites to Israel.]

In relation to the land we are called to possess no such feeling can exist. Heaven is the free gift of God to Abraham's *spiritual* seed, as Canaan was to the *natural*. It is given to them in Christ Jesus (Tit. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 9).

This command do we give, in the name of Almighty God, to every one of you who believe in Christ, "Go up and possess the land," which the Sovereign of the universe, of His own love and mercy, has given to you.]

(2.) By conflict, as the fruit of victory.

[Though the land was given to them, they were yet to gain it by the sword. We also have enemies to fight. The world, the flesh, and the devil obstruct. All must be vanquished before we can sit down to the promised inheritance. Nor let it be thought that heaven is less a gift on this account; for though we fight, it is not our own sword that gets us the victory. It was "God Himself who drove out the inhabitants" of the earthly Canaan, and it is through God alone that our weapons produce any effect in subduing our enemies before us (*cf.* John vi. 27; Ps. cxv. 1).]

Together with this command we are taught—

II. The way in which we should address ourselves to the performance of it. The command of God to us is positive, as that to them also was; and

(1.) Our obedience to Him should be prompt.

[I am persuaded they would have done well if they had never thought of sending spies to search out the land, and to tell them against what cities they should direct their first efforts. It was a carnal expedient, as the event proved. True, "Moses was well pleased" with the proposal; but he would not have been well pleased if he had clearly seen from whence it issued and what would be the result of it. He saw in it only a determination to go up; he discerned not the mixture of unbelief. What need had they to search when God had searched and was about to lead them? (*cf.* ver. 33). Had they said to Moses, 'Pray to God for us to direct us, and we are ready to go,' they would have done well; but, by trusting to an arm of flesh they fell.]

In like manner we should obey the Divine mandate without delay. We should "not confer with flesh and blood;" we should not be consulting how we may avoid the trials which God has taught us to expect; but should look simply to the Captain of our salvation, and follow implicitly His commands, regarding no word in comparison of His, nor ever dreaming of a more convenient season than the present. What He calls us to do we should "do" instantly, and "with all our might.]"

(2.) Our confidence in Him should be entire.

[They were bidden "not to fear or be discouraged." So neither should we "fear" any dangers that may threaten us, or "be discouraged" under any trial we may be called to endure. As for "Anakims" or



cities "walled up to heaven," what are they to us? Is not "He greater than is in us than any that can be in them"? If Jehovah be on our side, what have we to fear? We may say of all our enemies, as Joshua did of those he was called to encounter, "They are bread for us;" and shall not only be devoured as easily as a morsel of bread, but they and all that they have shall be our very support, invigorating our souls by the energies they call forth, and augmenting the happiness which they labour to destroy. Whatever may occur, we should never stagger at the promise through unbelief, but "be strong in faith, giving glory to God." We should go forward in the spirit of the holy Apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

III. Hear then, believers, and follow my advice.

(1.) Survey the land.

[See whether it be not *the glory of all lands*, "a land flowing with milk and honey." "Come up to Pisgah, and look down upon it." I would rather say, Come up to Zion, and behold its length and breadth. See it. Taste its fruits. Take in your hand "the grapes of Esheol." "Not one of its inhabitants ever says, I am sick." "No sorrow there, no sighing, no pain, no death" (cf. Isa. xxxiii. 24; Rev. xxi. 4, 23; Rom. viii. 18). Tell me, is it not worth the conflict? Only keep that glorious object in view, and you will never sheath your sword till you have gained the victory.]

(2.) Perform your duty.

[Gird on your swords. Go forward against the enemy. Make no account of any obstacles. Think neither of the strength nor the number of your enemies. Say not, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty," &c., &c. (Isa. xlix. 24, 25). Be not discouraged by a sense of your own weakness. Go on simply depending upon God (cf. 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; Isa. xli. 10). With confidence do I address you thus; for the Lord Jesus Himself has said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Only "fight the good fight of faith," and you shall be "more than conquerors through Him that loved you."]—*Simcon* (Abridged).

Ver. 21. In this verse we have a mind at home with God opening itself to the gaze of the world. What simple trust—reverent faith—holy dependence sparkle in the words! Among the many suggestions of this verse, let us notice—

I. That it indicates the bent of a good man's mind. It is Godwards. God is in all his thoughts. The *arrangement* of life is of God: the past *full* of God: the present is blessed by

Him: the future swayed by Him. Three characteristics of the good man—

- (1.) He is of an earnest spirit.
- (2.) He is humble.
- (3.) He is devout.

II. It delineates the power of a good man's faith.

(1.) *His confidence*. "The Lord thy God hath set the land before thee," &c. "Nothing but innocence and knowledge can give sound confidence to the heart."—*Bishop Hall*. "Confidence in one's self is the best nurse of magnanimity."—*Sir Philip Sidney*.

(2.) *His perseverance*. "Go up and possess." "*Persevere* is applied only to matters of some importance which demand a steady purpose of the mind; *persist* is used in respect to the ordinary business of life, as well as on more important occasions. A learner *perseveres* in his studies: a child may *persist* in making a request until he has obtained the object of his desires."—*Crabb*, *Synonyms*.

"Great effects come of industry and perseverance."—*Lord Bacon*.

"Those who attain any excellence commonly spend life in one common pursuit; for excellence is not often gained upon easier terms."—*Dr. Johnson*.

"He plies her hard, and much rain wears the marble."—*Shakespeare*.

"If there be one thing on earth truly admirable, it is to see God's wisdom blessing an inferiority of natural powers where they have been honestly, truly, and zealously cultivated."—*Dr. Arnold*.

(3.) *His hope*. "Fear not, neither be discouraged."

"It is said of Abraham that he believed in hope against hope. What is the meaning of these words? The passage intends to express that Divine hope overcame human hope. This is the hope which redounds to the glory of God, because it is an act of homage rendered to His omnipotence. He that is destitute of such hope can have no pretence to saving faith, and not to believe in the promises which God has made to us is an evidence that our souls are altogether fixed upon the toys and vanities of earth. That which the world calls wisdom is nothing more than



foolishness in the sight of God, and disbelief in His word argues a stupid indifference allied to the brute. Faith and hope repose upon the same foundation—the Word of God. The Christian believes in spite of the evidence of his senses, and he hopes for blessings which cannot yet be discerned by the senses. There is no faith where there is doubt and uncertainty; there is no hope where there is hesitation.”—*Chrysostom*.

“Reflected on the lake, I love  
To see the stars of evening glow,  
So tranquil in the heavens above,  
So restless in the wave below.  
Thus heavenly hope is all serene;  
But earthly hope, how bright so e’er,  
Still flutters o’er this changing scene,  
As false, as fleeting as ’tis fair.”

—*Heber*.

“Cease every joy to glimmer on my mind,  
But leave—oh! leave the light of Hope  
behind!”

—*Campbell*.

“A man cannot drown so long as his head is above water; hope lifts up the head and looks up to the redemption and salvation that is to come in another world in its fulness and perfection.”—*Polhill*.

III. It reveals the *source* of a good man’s power. “Behold, *the Lord thy God* hath set,” &c. Think of Moses speaking *thus* after a hundred and twenty years of life. Some grow tired of life and distrustful of God before they are thirty. For a hundred and twenty years Moses had lived near to God—he had *so* lived that God could bless him—God was therefore in all his thoughts.

(1.) God imparts strength to the good for the performance of the most arduous duties.

(2.) The resources of infinite strength always within the reach of the good man.

(3.) The method by which to realise this power is prayer.

There is an excellent story of a young man who was at sea in a mighty raging tempest, and when all the passengers were at their wits’ end for fear, he only was merry; and when he was asked the reason of his mirth, answered, “That the pilot of the ship was his father, and he knew

that his father would have a care of him.”—*Pulpit Illustrations*.

*Necessity of Perseverance.* “The philosopher being asked in his old age why he did not give over his practice and take his ease, answered, ‘When a man is to run a race of forty furlongs, would you have him sit down in the nine and thirtieth and so lose the prize?’ We do not keep a good fire all day, and let it go out in the evening when it is coldest, but then rather lay on more fuel, that we may go warm to bed. Thus he that stakes the heat of zeal in his age will go cold to bed, and in a worse case to his grave. To continue in giving glory to Christ is no less requisite than to begin; though the beginning be more than half, yet the end is more than all. The God of all perfection looks that our *ultimatum vitæ* should be His *optimum gloriæ*, that our last works should be our best works, that we should persevere in goodness to the end.”—*Things New and Old*.

*Goodness.* “The parts and signs of goodness are many. If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them; if he be compassionate towards the afflictions of others, it shows that his heart is like the noble tree that is wounded itself when it gives the balm; if he easily pardons and remits offences, it shows that his mind is planted above injuries, so that he cannot be shot; if he be thankful for small benefits, it shows that he weighs men’s minds, and not their trash; but, above all, if he have St. Paul’s perfection, that he would wish to be an anathema from Christ for the salvation of his brethren, it shows much of a Divine nature and a kind of conformity with Christ Himself.”—*Lord Bacon*.

God the fountain source of all our blessings. It is said of Hadrian VI., that having built a stately college at Lovain, he set this inscription over the front in golden letters, “*Trajectum plantavit, Lovanium rigavit, sed Cæsar dedit incrementum*” (Utrecht planted me, for there he was born; Lovain

watered me, for there he was bred ; but Cæsar gave the increase, who from the ferula brought him to the crosier, of a schoolmaster made him Pope of Rome). A witty passenger, reproving his folly, under-wrote, "Here was no room for God to do anything." Thus God may be said not to be in all the thoughts of self-seeking men : they do not, with those ancients, preface to their words, "Theos, Theos," but intervert a great part of the price with that ill couple, turning God's glory into shame, loving vanity, seeking after lies, such as, in the original, will deceive their expectations ; of which sort, by a speciality, is that smoke of popular applause, which, the higher it mounts, the sooner it vanishes and comes to nothing.—*Pulpit Illustrations.*

*Reward of perseverance.* "I recollect in Queen's County to have seen a Mr. Clerk, who had been a working carpenter, and when making a bench for the session's justices at the courthouse, was laughed at for taking peculiar pains in planing and smoothing the seat of it. He smilingly observed that he did so to make it easy for himself, as he was resolved he would never die till he had a right to sit thereupon ; and he kept his word. He was an industrious man—honest, respectable, and kind-hearted. He succeeded in all his efforts to accumulate an independence ; he did accumulate it, and rightly. His character kept pace with the increase of his property, and he lived to sit as a magistrate on that very bench which he sawed and planed."—*Sir Jonah Barrington.*

Vers. 22, 23, (*cf.* Num. xiii. 1, 2). There is no real discrepancy between these passages. The plan of sending the spies originated with the people, and, as in itself a reasonable one, it approved itself to Moses ; was submitted to God and sanctioned by Him ; and carried out under special Divine direction. The orator's purpose in this chapter is to bring before the people emphatically their own responsibilities and behaviour. It is, therefore, important to remind them that the sending of the spies, which led immediately to

their murmuring and rebellion, was their own suggestion.

It is frivolous to object that the generation which had sinned thus was dead, and that Moses was addressing men who had had no concern in the events to which he is referring. That this fact was present to the speaker's mind is clear from vers. 34, 35 ; nay, it was the very aim he had in view, to warn the present generation not to follow their fathers in their perversity, and so defraud themselves of the promised blessing, as their fathers had done. It is but natural that Moses, who had been the leader of the congregation all along, should, when addressing it collectively, treat it as the same which he had brought forth from Egypt, and had now for the second time conducted to the Promised Land.

The following verses to the end of the chapter give a condensed statement, the fuller account being in Num. xiii., xiv., of the occurrences which led to the banishment of the people for forty years into the wilderness. The facts are treated with freedom, as by one familiar with them, addressing those no less so, yet in consistency with the more strictly historical record of Numbers.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Vers. 22, 28. What a contrast these two verses present. The first brings before us the people, with commendable prudence, arranging for carrying out a great plan ; the second presents the most pitiful, contemptible picture one can imagine—the same people, because difficulty presented itself in the way of the purpose being conducted to success, cowardly crying out as the veriest abjects. Well might the words of Job xvii. 11 be quoted in connection with ver. 28 : "My purposes are broken off." The world is full of broken purposes. Every heart is filled with its tombstones raised over dead intentions and desires. The true cemetery is the human heart. Look at it—full of dreams of youth—early ambitions—grand schemes of self-profit, or national benefit, or boundless philanthropy. All dead. Two thoughts—

I. All men have, and have had, pur-

poses. The thought makes one shudder. The conflict of feeling too intense to endure. There were purposes of wealth, the present reality is poverty—the very want of a dinner. Recall Johnson's plans, purposes, and poverty.

"He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that, one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James's Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but, in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and 'resolved they would stand by their country.'"—*Boswell's Life of Johnson*.

"The longer I live the more I am certain that the great difference between men—between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant—is *energy, invincible determination—a purpose* once fixed, and then *death or victory!* That quality will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talent, no circumstances, no opportunities, will make a two-legged creature *a man* without it."—*Buxton*.

II. All men can tell us something about purposes. One can tell us of purposes carried into effect. Another looks to the earth and points to something lying there snapped as a broken spear, and with a deep-drawn moan groans out—"my purpose."

Both these men can instruct. The successful man can show how his success was realised; the unsuccessful can reveal the causes of his failure. Both are governed by a law, if we only knew it.

What is the law of success? The law varies with the sphere in which the success is to be attained, and the nature of the success sought; if the success be earthly merely, then the law of success is in selfishness and ability, or, as one has expressed the idea on its optimistic side, "success is the child of cheerfulness and courage;" if, however, the success sought is heavenly, then the law that governs it will be faith in God, and a heart inspired by God's Spirit to do *right* at any cost. In the one case success is in the possession of a *thing*; in the other in what one *is*.

"Failures are with heroic minds the stepping-stones to success."—

"It is far from true, in the progress of knowledge, that after every failure we must recommence from the beginning. Every failure is a step to success; every detection of what is false directs us to what is true; every trial exhausts some tempting form of error. Not only so, but scarcely any attempt is entirely a failure; scarcely any theory, the result of steady thought, is altogether false; no tempting form of error is without some latent charm derived from truth."—*Whewell*.

"If you wish success in life, make perseverance your bosom friend, experience your wise counsellor, caution your elder brother, and hope your guardian genius."

—*Addison*.

"So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."—*Hebrew Chronicles*.

"The talent of success is nothing more than doing what you can do well, and doing well whatever you do, without a thought of fame."—*Longfellow*.

"I confess," says a thoughtful writer, "that increasing years bring with them an increasing respect for men who do not succeed in life, as those words are commonly used. Ill success sometimes arises from a conscience too sensitive, a taste too fastidious, a self-forgetfulness too romantic, a modesty too retiring. I will not go so far as to say, with a living poet, that the world knows nothing of its greatest men; but there are forms of greatness, or at least of excellence, which 'die and make no sign;' there are martyrs that miss the palm, but not the stake; heroes without the laurel, and conquerors without the triumph."

"Whosoever will live altogether out of himself, and study other men's humours, shall never be unfortunate."—*Sir W. Raleigh*.

"Those who believe in a future state of rewards and punishments act very absurdly if they form their opinion of a man's merits from his successes. But certainly, if I thought the whole circle of our being was included between our births and deaths, I should think a



man's good fortune the measure and standard of his real merit, since Providence would have no opportunity of rewarding his virtue and perfections but in the present life. A virtuous unbeliever, who lies under the pressure of misfortune, has reason to cry out, as they say Brutus did a little before his death, 'O virtue, I have worshipped thee as a substantial good, but I find thou art an empty name.'—*Addison*.

"Had I miscarried, I had been a villain;  
For men judge actions alway by events:  
But when we manage by a just foresight,  
Success is prudence, and possession right."  
—*Higgins*.

"To judge by the event is an error all abuse, and all commit; for in every instance, courage, if crowned with success, is heroism; if clouded by defeat, temerity. When Nelson fought his battle in the Sound, it was the result *alone* that decided whether he was to kiss a *hand* at a court, or a *rod* at a court-martial."—*Colton*.

Ver. 24. "Came unto the valley of Eshcol." In Num. xiii. 22-24, we have a full account of this visit, likewise the meaning of the word Eshcol given. It means "bunch" or "cluster" of grapes (Num. xiii. 24).—*Fürst*. The grapes must have been a welcome sight to the desert-worn travellers. Dr. Livingstone tells us something of this feeling: "In latitude 18° we were rewarded with a sight which we had not enjoyed for a year before—large patches of grape-bearing vines. There they stood before my eyes. The sight was so entirely unexpected that I stood for some time gazing at the clusters of grapes with which they were loaded, with no more thought of plucking than if I had been beholding them in a dream."

"A cluster of grapes of Eshcol, the magnificent richness and size of which may be judged from the circumstance of its being carried on a pole, supported on the shoulders of two men. Eshcol still retains its celebrity for the produce of grapes. Sir M. Montefiore lately got a bunch a yard long."—*Jamieson*.

Ver. 25. "It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us."

These words were spoken primarily with regard to the Land of Promise: but much that was spoken of that promised land, the natural Canaan, may be applied with great propriety and equal force to that promised inheritance of the saints—the spiritual Canaan of the soul. It matters little what image be used for representing that gift (*cf.* Rom. vi. 23) of God, for which among the millions of men's words no one word has been found adequate for its expression, whether we compare it to the "*promised land*" of Palestine, or to "*wisdom*;" for in qualifying the expression of the idea we simply follow the leadings of the metaphor, and, whether we say that "it is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us," or, "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness," we in the end say the same thing though by different terms, just as we say one-half or two-quarters or five-tenths. The Christian heritage of a holy and perfected life, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is a "good land" full of richness and fatness, a land of milk and honey; it is also very "pleasant." It is pleasant because good: it is good because pleasant. Though the pleasantness of religion is always difficult of recognition to the young disciple, it is only so because the Cross of Christ has to be carried by the flesh before that Cross can lose its weight, and its material be woven into a crown. Religion is believed to be good because possessed by the best of men: the assurance of its pleasantness comes by the experience of its power. "That pleasure is, in the nature of it, a relative thing, and so imparts a peculiar relation and correspondence to the state and condition of the person to whom it is a pleasure"—*South*. Religion is "good" or "pleasant" from its own inherent nature.

I. Because it is the proper pleasure of that part of man which is the largest and most comprehensive of pleasure, *i.e.*, his mind: a substance of a boundless comprehension.

1. In reference to speculation, as it sustains the name of understanding.



2. In reference to practice, as it sustains the name of conscience.

II. Because it is such a pleasure as never satiates or wearies; for it properly affects the spirit, and a spirit feels no weariness, as being privileged from the causes of it.

The pleasures of the table pall; the pleasures of exercise grow into weariness; but in fulfilled duty is a pleasure (*cf.* work and its joy). How much more in religion! As much as religion is nobler than work.

III. Because it is such as to be in no one's power to take from us, but only in his who has it; so that he who has the property is also sure of its perpetuity. This can be said of no other form of enjoyment. All pass in the using, or are taken away by time. We are at the mercy of men. But though men take away our life they cannot take away that joy of our religion.

"There is nothing that can raise a man to that generous absoluteness of condition, as neither to cringe, to fawn, or to depend meanly; but that which gives him that happiness within himself, for which men depend upon others. For surely I need salute no great man's threshold, sneak to none of his friends or servants, to speak a good word for me to my conscience. It is a noble and a sure defiance of a great malice, backed with a great interest; which yet can have no advantage of a man but from his own expectations of something that is without himself. But if I can make my duty my delight; if I can feast, and please, and caress my mind with the pleasures of worthy speculations or virtuous practices; let greatness and malice vex and abridge me if they can: my pleasures are as free as my will; no more to be controlled than my choice, or the unlimited range of my thoughts and my desires."—*South*.

"Took of the fruit," &c.

Subject: Fruitfulness.

I. Notice the idea of the text as applied to the land. It was fruitful. Eshcol was noted for its fruit. As fruit was gathered from the land, the land was therefore *good*. It had re-

ceived God's gift of capability. God's gift is not the effect of man's labour: though man's apprehension is necessary for the grasping of what God holds out.

II. Notice the idea of the text in its moral bearings. The caterpillar ever encases the butterfly. So physical facts inwrap a moral truth.

(a.) Fruit is the result of cultivation. True in their native state, when wild and uncultivated trees bear *some* fruit; but such fruit is not to be compared with that produced by care and cultivation. The best fruit is the product of art. God works by means.

(b.) Suggests inquiries with regard to our own fruitfulness. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," was an apostolic injunction, and one that no man can dispense with.

Vers. 25, 26. "A good land which the Lord our God doth give us: notwithstanding ye would not go up." God gives bountifully, but the devil strews impediments in the path that leads to possession. The brave, faithful, hopeful, and strong trample over them and realise success; the cowardly, faithless, hopeless, and weak are terrified by these lions in the way, and die ignoble deaths in the presence of what might have been rich possessions. Here we have plainly that though God gives a kingdom—a goodly land—we fail to possess it, because we refuse, through our fears and on account of impediments, to enter upon it.

I. Our animal appetites come into collision with spiritual progress.

"It is reported of the hedgehog that he goes to a pile of apples, and gathers up as many as he can upon his prickles, and when he comes to his hole, he goes in with his prickles but leaves his apples behind him. Thus how many there are who have wallowed in the apples of their pleasures, with many a prick and twinge of conscience, who when they shall descend, as shortly they must, to their holes of darkness, shall be compelled to leave all their sweets of false delight behind them, and carry with them nothing but the stings and soars of a wounded conscience."

There will be no *spiritual* fruit there.

In the pursuit of gross pleasure, the spirit is killed.

II. The lower in man, which belongs to the seen and temporal, urges to the sacrifice of the higher and spiritual. In every life there is a Job's wife saying, "Curse God, and die." No man is free from the voice that whispered in the ear of Judas; some there are who sell the Christ for a paltry few pieces of silver. Adam did that. He bought the present at the cost of the whole future. So Esau; a birthright, for a mess of pottage. It is foolish: more so, criminal.

III. When this is done retribution begins here. God does not wait till man comes into the sphere and region of the eternal to punish. Punishment follows quick upon the sin, in many cases, in this world. Israel was turned back into the desert. David was punished by "the sword" that never left his house (*cf.* 2 Sam. xii. 10). Character is lost. Health departs. Friends are alienated. The heart grows cold and is hardened. Sin slays sympathy with what is divine. Saul had his kingdom taken from him.

*Beware of the lusts of the flesh.*—"When the oyster opens himself to the sun, being tickled with the warmth thereof, then his enemy, the crab-fish, stealeth behind him, and thrusteth in his claw, and will not suffer him to shut again, and so devoureth him. The like is written of the crocodile, that being so strong a serpent as he is, and impregnable, yet, when he is gaping, to have his teeth picked by the little bird called trochil, his enemy, the ichneumon creepeth into his body, and ceaseth not to gnaw upon his entrails, till he hath destroyed them. Think upon the urchin and the snail: whilst the urchin keeps himself close in the bottom of the hedge, he is either not espied or contemned; but when he creeps forth to suck the cow, he is dogged and chopped in. So the snail, when he lies close, with his house on his head, is esteemed for a dead thing and not looked after; but when in liquorishness to feed upon the dews that lie upon the grass, or upon the sweetness of the rose-bush, he will

be perking abroad, that the gardener findeth and smashes him. The lesson is: we must not yield to the sweet baits of the flesh, but we must mortify our members upon the earth, and ever beware that we seek not our death in the error of our life: otherwise if we wilfully offer ourselves to be led as an ox to the slaughter, and as a sheep to the shambles, what marvel if we have our throat cut, or be led captive of Satan at his will."

*The danger of fleshly lusts.*—"It is said of the torpedo, a kind of dangerous sea-fish, that it is of so venomous a nature, that if it chance to touch but the line of him that angles, the poison is thereby imparted to the rod, and thence to the hand of him that holds it; whereupon the party is so benumbed and stupefied on a sudden that he loses the use of his limbs. Even so, when enchanting lusts insinuate themselves into, or indeed but barely touch upon, voluptuous minds, they grow, with the companions of Ulysses not only brutish, but withal so senseless, that they have not the power to think a good thought, or to do a good action."—*Things New and Old.*

"For there is no doubt but a man, while he resigns himself up to the brutish guidance of sense and appetite, has no relish at all for the spiritual, refined delights of a soul clarified by grace and virtue. The pleasures of an angel can never be the pleasures of a hog. But this is the thing that we contend for; that a man, having once advanced himself to a state of superiority over the control of his inferior appetites, finds an infinitely more solid and sublime pleasure in the delights proper to his reason, than the same person had ever conveyed to him by the bare ministry of his senses. His taste is absolutely changed, and therefore that which pleased him formerly becomes flat and insipid to his appetite, now grown more masculine and severe."—*South.*

The character of the profligate George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, is well known to all who are acquainted with the reign of Charles II. "He was," as said the Earl of Clarendon in his history, "a man of noble presence; he had great

liveliness of wit, and a peculiar faculty of turning serious things into ridicule. He had no principles of religion, virtue, or friendship. Pleasure, frolic, and extravagant diversion, were all he regarded. He had no steadiness of conduct; he could never fix his thought nor govern his estate, though it was at one time the greatest in England. He was bred about the king, and for many years had a great ascendancy over him; but at length he drew a lasting disgrace upon himself, and ruined both body and mind, fortune and reputation. The madness of vice appeared in him in very eminent instances; and at last he became contemptible and poor, sickly, and sunk in all respects, so that his conversation was as much avoided as ever it had been courted." His own state of mind can be best learned from his letter to Dr. Barrow: "Oh what a prodigal have I been of the most valuable of all possessions—time. I have squandered it with a profusion unparalleled; and now, when the enjoyment of a few days would be worth the world, I cannot flatter myself with the prospect of half a dozen hours. How despicable, my dear friend, is that man who never prays to God but in the hour of distress! In what manner can he supplicate that Omnipotent Being in his afflictions, whom, in the time of his prosperity, he never remembered with reverence. Do not brand me with infidelity, when I tell you that I am almost ashamed to offer up my petitions at the throne of grace, or to implore that Divine mercy in the next world which I have scandalously abused in this. Shall ingratitude to man be looked upon as the blackest of crimes, and not ingratitude to God? Shall an insult offered to the king be looked upon in the most offensive light, and yet no notice be taken when the King of kings is treated with indignity and disrespect? . . . I am forsaken by all my acquaintances: utterly neglected by the friends of my bosom and the dependants of my bounty; but no matter; I am not fit to converse with the former, and have no abilities to serve the latter. Let me not be wholly cast off by the good. Favour me with a visit as soon as possible. Writing to

you gives me some ease, especially on a subject I could talk of for ever. I am of opinion this is the last visit I shall ever solicit from you; my distemper is powerful. Come and pray for the departing spirit of the poor unhappy

"BUCKINGHAM."

In Cunningham's "Lives of Eminent and Illustrious Englishmen," we have the following concerning the same man. "About the period of Charles's death, his own health became so much affected that he was reluctantly compelled to retire into the country to recruit himself. The spot which he made choice of with this view was his own manor of Helmsley, in Yorkshire. Here he generally passed his time betwixt the sports of the chase and the pleasures of the table. An ague and fever, which he caught by sitting on the ground after a long hunt, terminated his life. The attack was so sudden and violent that he could not be removed to his own house, but was conducted to a wretched village inn, where, after languishing three days, he expired, unregretted, and almost unattended. He had lived the life of a profligate, and he died the death of an outcast. It is impossible to say anything favourable of such a man as Villiers, whose sole aim throughout life seems to have been self-gratification, and who scrupled not to commit any crime in the pursuit of this single object."

*The death of Voltaire.*—"In the midst of his triumphs, a violent hemorrhage raised apprehensions for his life:—D'Alembert, Diderot, and Marmontel, hastened to support his resolution in his last moments, but were only witnesses to their mutual ignominy, as well as to his own. Here let not the historian fear exaggeration. Rage, remorse, reproach, and blasphemy, all accompany and characterise the long agony of the dying atheist. His death, the most terrible ever recorded to have stricken the impious man, will not be denied by his companions in impiety. Their silence, however much they may wish to deny it, is the least of those corroborative proofs which might be adduced. Not one of those sophisters has ever dared to mention any sign of resolution or tran-



quillity evinced by their 'great chief' during the space of three months, which elapsed from the time he was crowned in the theatre until his decease. Such a silence expresses how great was their humiliation in his death! . . .

"The conspirators had strained every nerve to hinder their chief from consummating his recantation; and every avenue was shut to the priests whom Voltaire himself had sent for. The demons haunted every access; rage succeeded to fury, and fury to rage again, during the remainder of his life. Then it was that D'Alembert, Diderot, and about twenty others of the conspirators, who had beset his apartment, never approached him but to witness their own ignominy; and often he would curse them, and exclaim—'Retire! It is you who have brought me to my present state! Begone! I could have done without you all; but you could not exist without me! And what a wretched glory you have procured me!' Then would succeed the horrid remembrance of his conspiracy. They could hear him the prey of anguish and dread, alternately supplicating or blaspheming that God against whom he had conspired; and in plaintive accents he would cry out, 'O Christ! O Jesus Christ!' and then complain that he was abandoned by God and man. The hand that had traced, in ancient writ, the sentence of an impious and reviling king, seemed to trace before his eyes the horrid blasphemies which he had so often uttered. In vain he turned his head away; the time was coming apace when he was to appear before the tribunal of Him whom he had insulted; and his physicians, particularly M. Tronchin, calling in to administer relief, thunderstruck, retired, declaring 'that the death of the impious man was terrible indeed.' The pride of the conspirators would willingly have suppressed these declarations, but it was in vain. The Mareschal de Richelieu fled from his bedside, declaring 'it to be a sight too terrible to be sustained;' and M. Tronchin, 'that the furies of Orestes could give but a faint idea of those of Voltaire.'"—*Abbe Barruel*, quoted in "The Christian's Sketch Book."

Vers. 21 and 26. "Go up." . . . "Ye would *not*."

What is this but unbelief on the part of Israel? Though God had promised to give the land, the people had refused to take it. Why? Because a few cowardly spies said, "It will be hard work." And the work became harder to the minds of this people because they had no faith in God, who helps in the accomplishment of all work. If they had believed God, difficulty would have been nothing.

I. God might have abstained from all interferences in the life and action of Israel. But He was pleased to identify Himself with His people (*cf.* Heb. xi. 23-27).

II. God continues that interest spiritually. Those who believe He helps. Those who believe not are condemned, powerless, ruined (John iii. 18).

III. When salvation is provided, the anger of God will be great if it be refused (*cf.* Pharaoh). Israel hardened his neck. "He that hardens his heart is suddenly cut off."

IV. Help is provided for the sinner, but many will not accept it. "Ye would not go up."

(a.) Its necessity—man is dead.

(b.) Nature of the help—life (*cf.* John x. 10).

(c.) Its completeness (*cf.* work of Christ).

Vers. 26-30. Pictures presented here:

1. A calm righteous man, vers. 26 and 29.

2. Impotent rage, vers. 27, 28.

3. Perfect confidence in personal destiny, vers. 29, 30.

Vers. 26-36. There is something very brave and outspoken in these words. Picture a man standing up before an infuriated people with the calmness that the tone of this passage implies. (*Cf.* a great political leader *rebuking* a Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square popular demonstration.) The Christian minister is at times in such position. He must preach a truth unsavoury to the natural man. Let there be the same calm, brave outspokenness, and force of



dignity. Moses' power in the God who was speaking through him. Four points—

I. His entire self-possession.

II. A co-operator with God.

III. His power to adapt himself to great crises.

IV. He could rebuke, because he knew much and loved much. His position among the people the result of his identifying himself with them in their need (Heb. xi. 23–27).

Ver. 26. "Ye would not go up," &c. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft," said a later oracle. Calm reflection compels one almost to say that rebellion against God is insanity. No good, ultimately, is gained by it.

I. All trifling with the Divine law involves at least the degradation of him who trifles with it (*cf.* vers. 33, 34). Sometimes his accomplices (*cf.* Ananias and Sapphira). Sometimes his friends, even though they be innocent (*cf.* Achan). "Sin of father visited upon children," &c.

II. All honour of the law secures exaltation in the kingdom of heaven (*cf.* 36–38). "They that honour Me will I honour."

(a.) Law of God in harmony with man's constitution.

(b.) God's law is God's advice for man to act by.

III. Man is to regulate his conduct by divine law, and not by human standards. "Act from a maxim at all times fit for law universal."—*Kant*. He who walks at noon lighted by a taper will be held guilty for all the consequences of such act. These men had to suffer all the effects possible on one act of folly and wrong.

IV. There is one characteristic in which the law of Christ is one with the law of Moses. Obedience to it is necessary. "If ye love Me, *keep* My commandments" (*cf.* John xiv. 21). "If a man love Me, he will keep My words," said Christ, "and My Father will love him." The Father's love consequent on the keeping of the words.

V. Let us take warning, and be careful how we treat the law of Christ, lest,

through unbelief and consequent failure of purpose, we be shut out of a better country (*cf.* all the early chapters of Epistle to the Hebrews).

"Ye rebelled," &c.

Human conduct is affected by the religious life of the community. We cannot live without God without losing spiritual life (*cf.* John xvi. 4–17). Such alienation acts most ruinously upon the heart life, which is the centre of being and the source of our activities.

I. God's covenant forsaken.

II. This means entering into covenant with the devil. He that is not for, is against.

III. Man becomes blinded to right.

IV. His blindness prevents his seeing the precipice of ruin on which he stands.

"Ye would not," &c.

Here are people who knew the will and command of God, yet would not obey. "Ye *would not* go up. From the words we may infer—

I. The possibility of *knowing* the law, but obstinately and persistently transgressing it (*cf.* Judas, Byron, Voltaire). These all *knew* what was right.

II. The possibility of having the law of God enforced upon us by a divinely-inspired and appointed prophet without it affecting us. How many hearers every Sunday murmur at preachers, men of God and true! *Moses* spoke: the people heedless. They would be the same if one spoke from the dead (Luke xix. 29–31).

III. The law of God must be obeyed whether it meet our approbation or not. It is *God's* law; that is sufficient.

(a.) Show it is *God's* law.

(b.) God's law may be known from its harmoniousness with the highest principles of right in our being; and from its meeting the necessary requirements of man's nature.

(c.) No command of God contrary to the law of the universe (*cf.* teaching of Christ—nature was the language of His thoughts).

The inconsiderate multitude.

"We see by experience that dogs do always bark at those they know not ;

and that it is their nature to accompany one another in those clamours: and so it is with the inconsiderate multitude, who, wanting that virtue which we call honesty in all men, and that especial gift of God which we call charity in Christian men, condemn without hearing, and wound without offence given.—*Sir Walter Raleigh.*

“*Notwithstanding.*” Although God had done so much, this was their only return. Nothing is more strongly marked in some dispositions than ingratitude.

“On adamant our wrongs we all engrave,  
But write our benefits upon the wave.”  
—*King.*

“Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted friend;  
More hideous, when thou showest thee in a  
child,  
Than the sea monster.” —*Shakespeare.*

“We seldom find people ungrateful as long as we are in a condition to render them services.”—*Roche foucauld.*

Of such it may be said, “Gratitude is a sense of favours yet to come.”

“Ingratitude is abhorred of God and man.”—*L'Estrange.*

“He that calls a man ungrateful sums up all the evil that a man can be guilty of.”—*Swift.*

“One ungrateful man does an injury to all who stand in need of aid.”—*Publius Syrus.*

Ingratitude reprieved.

“An empty bucket that is let down into a well doth, as it were, open its mouth to receive the water; but being drawn up full showeth his bottom only to the well that gave it. The sea receives her moisture from heaven, sweet and pleasant, but returns it salt and brackish. The clouds by the power of the sun-beams are exhaled from the earth; but, being once mounted, they darken that air and obscure that sun that raised them. The frozen snake in the fable stingeth him that refreshed it. Thus it is with all unthankful men, men ungrateful to God; He ladeth daily with benefits and blessings, and they lade Him with sins and trespasses.”—*Things New and Old.*

“Athenæus reporteth of Milesius that,

having brought a dolphin alive, and letting him go again into the sea; afterwards, himself being cast away by shipwreck, and ready to perish in the midst of the waters, the dolphin took him and carried him safely to shore. . . . It is more than beastly ingratitude for any man to reward evil for good.”—*Things New and Old.*

Ver. 27. “Ye murmured.” “And you took your sons and daughters into your bosoms.”—*Targum of Jonathan.*

“Because the Lord *hates*,” &c. “This evil saying Moses would not have his *enemies* say (Deut. ix. 28). It shows the height of their sin which imputed that to *hatred* wherein God manifested His *love* (Deut. iv. 37, vii. 8).”—*Ainsworth.*

“Lord God hated us.” An instance of how men rush to conclusions from insufficient premises. For homiletic purposes we might notice—

I. The impossibility of correctly educating ultimate principles and formulating doctrines thereon from a limited number of facts.

II. The danger of permitting feeling to usurp where judgment should rule.

III. The temptation to exaggerate extraordinary circumstances into utterly false facts.

IV. The danger of determining the will and nature of God by human wisdom and experience alone.

V. The necessity of *knowing* God (*cf.* passages in New Testament where *knowing* God is referred to) before affirming anything of Him. Moses *knew* God. How differently would he have interpreted His providence. Could God but speak to every man, much of the mystery and mercy in many lives would instantly disappear. Read Scripture. They testify of God.

“Ye murmured in your tents.”

It must have been a stirring sight to see the thousands of Israel standing in the doors of their tents:—A wild horde of semi-barbarians, fierce in their rage, and almost ungovernable. What a picture of a sinful world, where all men are uncultivated in the ways of holiness and submission—a frantic host of moral

and spiritual maniacs. More than once had Moses such an experience. No penitence; no submission; no hope: rage on every face.

I. The sorrow of this people had reference to the loss of what they esteemed valuable. Things are not valuable to the multitude for what they are in themselves, but according to people's ideas of them. (*Cf.* Bear robbed of her whelps.) Fierce! The whelps precious to the bear. There *is* real worth—a something valuable in itself.

“Greatness and goodness are not means, but ends:

Hath he not alway treasures, alway friends,  
The good great man? Three treasures,—  
Love and Light,

And calm Thoughts, regular as infant's  
breath;

And three firm friends, more sure than day  
or night,—

Himself, his Maker, and the Angel  
Death.” —*Coleridge.*

“Sorrow being the natural and direct offspring of sin, that which first brought sin into the world must, by necessary consequence, bring in sorrow too.”—*South.*

Man has a true cause for sorrow when he loses his soul, as he does by sin, for he loses something really valuable. For such many are satisfied, with very quiet, well-behaved sorrow indeed.

II. This sorrow was more passionate and all-absorbing, because of the unexpectedness of its cause. This grief came as a sudden pain. It was acute, not chronic. Long pains deaden.

“The violence of sorrow is not at the first to be striven withal; being, like a mighty beast, sooner tamed with following than overthrown by understanding.”—*Sir. P. Sydney.*

Enmity to God.—“It profits us nothing to be peaceful toward all men if we be at war with God; it is no good to us if all men approve, and the Lord be offended; neither is there any danger, though all shun and hate us, if with God we find acceptance and love.”—*Chrysostom.*

“No man can certainly conclude God's love or hatred to any person from what befalls him in this world.”—*Tillotson.*

“From the instant of our birth we experience the benignity of Heaven, and the malignity of corrupt nature.”—*Trusler.*

Vers. 24–28. The spies report and its effect.

The beginning of any line of conduct usually enables an attentive observer to form a just anticipation of the manner in which it will be pursued. If the beginning is right, the end is right. If the end is a failure, a something wrong is implied in the beginning. The people proposed to send spies. So artfully were their guilty motives concealed, that Moses failed to see them and was even pleased with the proposal. The result, however, reveals all. A voice of warning is meant to reach our conscience from the page of Jewish history (*cf.* 1 Cor. x. 11). The fact and its lessons may be considered under three heads:—

I. The conduct of the unfaithful spies.

II. The conduct of Caleb and Joshua.

III. The conduct of the guilty nation.

I. The conduct of the unfaithful spies.

1. Men of position.

2. Their commission clearly defined (Num. xiii. 18–20).

3. They accomplished their work safely.

4. God showed Himself with them. Thus far, well. But they were men of sight, not faith. All that God had revealed went for nothing. They saw only difficulties. They overlooked what God had done for them. They discouraged the people.

II. “As there is no society free from some corruption, so it is hard, if in a community of men there be not some faithfulness.” Such fidelity was shown by Joshua and Caleb. They form a contrast with the ten. But Israel would not hear them. The world will ever hear its own prophets; and stone those who speak in the name of God.

III. The conduct of the guilty nation. If experience had been of any use to Israel they would surely have listened to Caleb and Joshua: but with *such* experience is thrown away.

1. The unfaithful spies and guilty multitude represent a class;—*the timid*



and desponding professors of religion who need to be warned of their SIN.

2. "There are many, however, who possess a portion of that flame which glowed in the hearts of Caleb and Joshua; men gifted with courage for the warfare of life, and zealous for their God."—*Buddicom*.

Ver. 28. "Walled up to heaven." An hyperbole. Contrast hyperbole with reality: reality with hyperbole. *Hyperbole*, a figure in rhetoric by which anything is increased or diminished beyond exact truth, e.g., "he runs faster than lightning."—*Latham*. *Reality* is opposed to shadows, types, pictures.—*Whately*. What is, not what merely seems.—*Latham*.

"A bird carries the voice" (Eccl. x. 20); "Amorites whose height was height of cedars" (Amos iii. 9) are hyperboles. "Length of bedstead of Og reality, no hyperbole."—*Maimonides*.

(See also "Quintilian Instit.," book viii. c. 6, and Patrick on this passage).

"Walled up to heaven." "This description of the cities as 'high and walled up to heaven,' though a strong hyperbole, answers the description of most Eastern cities whose walls are smooth, very lofty, and difficult to be scaled. The walls were of mud or of stone; and as the people were unacquainted with scaling ladders, whenever they had surrounded their cities with walls too high for man to climb over, they considered their security established. The same simple expedient is resorted to by the Arabs who live in the very wilderness in which Israel wandered, and who are far more inured to warlike enterprises than that people were. The great monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai is built of freestone, with high smooth walls. On the east side there is a window by which those that are within draw up pilgrims into the monastery with a basket, which they let down by a rope that runs through a pulley to be seen above at the window, and the pilgrims go into it one after another. These walls are so high that they cannot be scaled, and without cannon the place cannot be taken."—*Thevenot*.

"Whither shall we go up?" Agreeably to the nature of interrogative particles, *whither* sometimes including a negative, may be resolved into *nowhere*.—*Fürst*. This suggests that we may interpret the verse:—"What is the use of struggling and toiling? We have nowhere to go. We may as well give up at once."

"Our brethren discouraged our hearts" (*cf.* "Crit. Notes"). The Bible is full of human nature. Man is to-day as he was 3000 years ago. Godless men had no courage for themselves, and, dog-in-the-manger like, would not let others have it. They took away what little the people had. We have here old types of a modern class. Two facts about them—

I. They see the difficulty of life, but no God to help them in it.

II. The difficulties seen, cause fear, and then fears magnify the difficulties.

Ver. 29. "Dread not." To deliver them from fear Moses adds two powerful arguments. He gives reasons for what he bids them do—

I. A promise of Divine assurance:—"The Lord . . . He shall fight," ver. 30.

II. The experience of past mercies:—"God bare thee," &c., ver. 31 (*cf.* His dealings with them in Egypt, wilderness, &c.); (*cf.* Isa. xlix. 22 with Exod. xix. 4).

Compare John xiv. 1, Luther's trans. Christ gives two reasons for disciples' faith. Ye believe in God—ye believe in Christ:—therefore no reason to fear.

Vers. 28, 29. Contrast by comparison of these two verses the character of the people and the character of Moses. Moses, strong: people, weak. In life of Moses a firm, clear, strong purpose; the nation swayed by every wind that blew. The character of Moses, as opposed to that of the people, might aptly illustrate the character of the Christian who has truly laid his foundation on the Rock, in contrast with that of a worldling who is tossed as a straw upon the waters. The true Christian is essentially and pre-eminently a religious man. Has



fixed principles and purpose in life. Religion means harmony with God.

I. Religion is a reality.

II. Religion is a reality in the soul.

III. Religion is a vital reality in the soul.

IV. Religion is a vital reality in the soul, ever discernible. True religion is known.

(a.) In its essence.

(b.) Manifestations.

(c.) By its fruits.

Vers. 28, 29. Contrast Moses and the spies. Moses encouraged; the spies discouraged. Here, extremes of character; courage, cowardice. Many such antitheses of character in Scripture. Hezekiah and Manasseh; Jacob, Esau; Jesus, Judas; Judas, the residence of Satan; Jesus, the residence of all the godhead bodily. But watch the influence of the bad; it undoes all the good accomplished. The people discouraged; the Son of God sold, &c. A few lessons may be gathered from these facts:—

I. Too intimate connection between the Church and world may prove injurious to the Church. "Man cannot handle pitch," &c. The people discouraged though they had a Moses.

"It is better, safer I am sure it is, to ride alone, than to have a thief's company. And such is a wicked man, who will rob thee of precious time, if he do thee no more mischief. The Nazarites, who might drink no wine, were also forbidden to eat grapes, whereof wine is made (Num. vi. 3). So we must not only avoid sin itself, but also the causes and occasions thereof, amongst which, bad company—the lime-twigs of the devil—is the chiefest, especially to catch those natures which, like the good-fellow-planet Mercury, are most swayed by others."—*T. Fuller*.

II. Hypocrites are more injurious to the Church than non-professors. The people had not been affected by foes quite as terrible in the wilderness as those in Canaan. Opinions of enemies do not affect: it is the thought of a friend that influences. These spies were supposed to be friends: they were in service of Israel; the hypocrite is often

in the service of the Church: the acknowledged friend. The Church is identified with him.

(a.) The world depends upon him for its opposition to religion.

(b.) Hypocrites become the leader of the enemy after leaving Christ (*cf.* Judas. He led the band, &c.).

(c.) They know the failures of Christian brethren, because taken into confidence as friends.

(Explain what a hypocrite is, ὑποκριτής = one who plays upon the stage. An actor—feigner. Therefore a false pretender to virtue or piety).

III. Feeble moral characters injurious to the Church. But remember two facts with regard to the Church—

(a.) It is an hospital for souls' disease, as well as (b.) the home of the strong in Christ. Be tender to the weak, but restrain them from the positions of the tried and strong.

IV. The world's joy and the Church's grief. If the heathen had known what grief there was in Israel, their heart doubtless rejoiced. Often what is death to one is pleasure to another (*cf.* fable of boys and frogs). Death of Christ, the life of the world (*cf.* John xi. 50). "One man's loss another's gain."

Ver. 29. "Dread not," &c. Encouragement.

I. Every good work is sure to meet with opposition. In every journey there will necessarily be rough places.

II. Christians are not required to go anywhere where their Captain has not gone before.

III. The Christian is not to wait till all difficulties are removed. His action will sometimes remove difficulties. "Go forward," &c. (*cf.* Josh. iii. 15).

Faithful discharge of duty in everyday life is doing God's work: the promise of the following verse applies to the removal of difficulties, &c., and the fighting for us in the warfare of daily experience, business, family, &c.

*Man's need, God's opportunity.*—*Philo*, the Jew, being employed as an ambassador or messenger to *Caius Caligula*, the emperor of Rome, his entertainment was but slight, for he had no

sooner spoken on the behalf of his country, but he was commanded to depart the court; whereupon he told his people that he was verily persuaded that God would now do something for them, because the emperor was so earnestly bent against them."—*Pulpit Illustrations*.

Vers. 29, 30. Dread not, &c.

The desponding encouraged. Much in life to depress. Opposition quickly rises. Success dependent on courage. Conquest wavers with the wavering heart. Napoleon lost a battle through a bilious fit. Strongest, coolest, bravest, have seasons when they need encouragement. Three ways in which Moses encouraged—

I. By appeal to the fact of God's presence. "The Lord God which goeth before you."

II. By appeal to the success of the past (*cf.* ver. 31). "In the wilderness . . . where God bare thee," &c.

III. By appeal to future success, ver. 30. "He shall fight."

Success in undertakings is not infrequently the result of very unlikely and small beginnings. The following incident from the battle between Marcellus the Roman, and Hannibal the Carthaginian, cited from Plutarch, well illustrates the point:—

"Both armies then engaged, and Hannibal, seeing no advantage gained by either, ordered his elephants to be brought forward into the first line, and to be pushed against the Romans. The shock caused great confusion at first in the Roman front; but Flavius, a tribune, snatching an ensign staff from one of the companies, advanced, and with the point of it wounded the foremost elephant. The beast upon this turned back, and ran upon the second, the second upon the next that followed, and so on till they were all put in great disorder. Marcellus observing this, ordered his horse to fall furiously upon the enemy, and, taking advantage of the confusion already made, to rout them entirely. Accordingly, they charged with extraordinary vigour, and drove the Carthaginians to their entrenchments. The slaughter was dreadful; and the fall

of the killed, and the plunging of the wounded elephants, contributed greatly to it. It is said that more than 8000 Carthaginians fell in this battle; of the Romans not above 3000 were slain." All this success, in a measure, was owing to a man wounding an elephant with an ensign staff."

"Success may be delayed for a time. Failure may seem to attend our work. There may be no blossoms or fruit now; but it *will* come. Our judgment is often rash and premature. The sailor predicts storms; there is a great calm: the merchant a panic; there is a rich harvest: the minister barrenness; there is an abundant blessing." The spies said the land is full of big men: Moses said God will help us. It matters not who is *against*, if God is only *for* us.

*Faith produces Confidence*.—"In the midst of a tumultuous sea the modes of the compass remain immovable, because they govern themselves, not according to the winds, but according to the influence of the heavens. So the faith of the faithful remaineth firm amongst the rude agitations and distracted variations of the world, because it governeth itself, not according to the instability of the affairs of this world, but according to the promises of God, which are from all eternity."—*Pulpit Illustrations*.

*Power of Faith*.—"When Toxaris saw his countryman Anacharsis in Athens, he said unto him, I will show thee all the wonders of Greece: in seeing Solon thou seest all, even Athens itself, and the whole glory of the Greeks. Tell me, Christian, hast thou faith and assured trust in the Lord? then thou hast more than all the wonders of Greece, upon the point all the wonderful gifts of grace; for faith is the mother virtue from which all others spring, and without faith all the best of our actions are no better than sin."—*Things New and Old*.

Ver. 30. "The Lord your God . . . goeth before you." We need to read side by side with these words those of the apostle: "Because greater is He that is in *you* than he that is in the world" (1 John iv. 4). When a man is

tenanted by God, he has not much reason to fear, for he becomes an inheritor of the visions and experience of Elisha (*cf.* 2 Kings vi. 16-18).

I. Show wherein God is with us.

(a.) God with a man by his faith. Paradoxical though it sounds, yet true. To believe in God is to realise the emotions of the Divine presence. Such feelings strengthen. Faith in the Almighty calls forth enthusiasm and courage. For so long as there is faith, hope burns. The soldiers who had faith in Napoleon had his courage in their heart. They conquered.

(b.) God with a man by His word. One way to communicate ourselves to others is to speak to them. Sometimes the written word suffices. A word from a distant friend gives us *the man* even more than his bodily presence would without the word. So God sends His word to men. There is the word spoken by the prophet. There is the Living Word, Jesus Christ; the expression of the Father's heart.

(c.) God is with a man by His Spirit. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" "Know ye not that the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us?"

II. Show how the Divine Presence bears upon the soul.

(a.) The power is in us by which to gain fully the world of our hopes. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He *ἐξουσίαν*" (not merely capability = *δύναμιν*, Lücke,—still less privilege or prerogative (Chrysostom and others),—but *power*, De Wette; involving all the actions and states needful to them so becoming and removing all the obstacles in their way, *e.g.*, the wrath of God and the guilt of sin, Alford) "to become the children of God—to those which believe in His name."

(b.) By this power man is superior to the world (*cf.* 1 John v. 4, 5).

(c.) This power gives moral and spiritual advancement in life.

"Cherished with hope, and fed with joy, it grows;  
 In cheerful buds their opening bloom disclose,  
 And round the happy soil diffusive odours flows."  
 —Pope.

Vers. 29, 30. "Be not afraid. . . . God fights for you."

Here in all the light and shade of historic life is a picture of the soul that is in Christ Jesus—a spirit with God fighting for it, on its side (*cf.* Rom. viii. 1-17). The natural man is apart from God; he has to fight for himself. The man who like ancient Israel has entered into covenant with God, has passed from Death—alienation, into Life—cooperation with God, and he has *God* fighting his battles for him. The past becomes an earnest of the future. The grace given a deposit of the whole amount to be given in the Spirit's subsequent developments.

I. Man in Christ is freed from sin. He has escaped from the slavery of *him* or *that* which is opposed to the divine will. He lives and works with God: God with him.

II. By this man is advanced in moral and spiritual excellence. He is no longer a slave. He is Christ's free man. The true idea of Divine holiness is realised. The man knows daily from joy-filled triumph, and experience, that God is on his side, overcoming evil in his nature, harmonising discord, and restoring him, the man, to the likeness of a Son of God.

III. Man in Christ is destined for future glorification. (Benisch translate ver. 30, "The *Eternal* your God," &c.) What an Eternal Being does is worthy of Eternity. The glory of man must have a larger arena than the confined amphitheatre of Time.

IV. He is destined to enjoy the glory which belongs to Christ Himself (*cf.* John xvii. 20-23).

Ver. 30. "He shall fight for you," &c. The Helper of His people. If God were only an idea, then the utterance of such a thought would be the cruellest act that demon-spirit could prompt, for hopes of the most sensitive nature would be raised only to be dashed down again. But because God is not an *idea* but a living *person*—the Hearer and Answerer of prayer—the sympathetic Friend—the Giver of grace for bearing sorrow—the thought of a



Helping God is one of the most encouraging to which man is legatee.

I. God's people often placed in circumstances of great difficulty. There are foes in the flesh; weakness and discord in the spirit; difficulties of many kinds without. All these have to be met. A man cannot at all times fight them for himself.

II. Help is given far superior not only to that of the strongest moments of a man's own natural power, but superior to that power which impedes his course.

III. This help only recognised by God's own people. Their eyes alone see the spiritual forms at hand to aid (*cf.* Elisha and his servant). Having eyes, they see.

IV. This sight requires the supernatural agency of Christ. He alone gives sight to the blind that they may see. The world is filled with God's glory could man but look upon it. Moses could see the power of God at hand to help even though the people were entirely ignorant of it.

Ver. 30. "The Lord your God shall fight," &c.

Though this passage in its primary and historical sense refers to Israel's conflict with the enemies who kept him from the promised land, yet the Christian, with his spiritual age illumined with the light of glory, may see beyond the letter into the mysterious import of the spirit; for he deals with the truth which the word enshrines. The Christian has his battle to fight. We might notice—

I. That the battle is for a dominion: Israel fought for a promised land, the Christian for a promised crown of life. Satan offered *all* the kingdoms of the world to Christ, but His *one* crown was more to Him than they all.

II. The battle in which the Christian is engaged is won by faith. Israel lost because he did not believe God. The Christian fails when his faith is weak (*cf.* Peter on the water. The disciples in the storm. Victory of faith, &c.).

III. The Christian's battle is sure to

result in victory (*cf.* John xvi. 33). (*Cf.* the whole of Christ's promise of help in His last great speech, John xiv.—xviii.)

Ver. 31. "As a man doth bear his son" (*cf.* Num. xi. 12). "A simile suggested by his sojourn in the desert of Midian with Jethro."—*Keil and Delitzsch*.

"Supplying you with water out of the rock, sending bread from heaven, defending you from the wild beasts and fiercer enemies, and bearing with your numerous provocations."—*Clapham*.

"I, said (God), who was a father, became nurse, and My little one I Myself carried in My arms, lest it should be hurt in the wilderness, and lest it should be frightened by the heat or darkness; in the day I was a cloud, by night a pillar of fire."—*Jerome*.

It is the realisation in one's own heart of this *presence* by day and night that makes the true child of God courageous. While God is Father and *nurse* man has not much to fear. There is a story told of St. Basil that well illustrates this. The emperor sent to him to subscribe to the Arian heresy. The messenger at first used good language, and promised great perferment if he would turn Arian; to which Basil replied, "Alas! their speeches are fit to catch little children who seek such things, but we that are *nourished* and taught by the Holy Scriptures are readier to suffer a thousand deaths than suffer one syllable a little of the Scriptures to be altered." The messenger told him he was mad. He replied, "I wish I were for ever thus mad." It matters not whether it be Apostle, Father, or Reformer. All are alike. Paul, Basil, Luther, each had the same presence—each had the same courage.

We have this beautifully exemplified in the life of one who perished by shipwreck only a few years ago, the Rev. J. Mackenzie:—"In the brief interval, which elapsed between the vessel's striking and her going down, an attempt was made by some of the passengers to lower the two quarter-boats; but both were instantly swamped, and about a dozen lives were lost in them. Mr.



Mackenzie, meanwhile, had got on deck, but though a good swimmer, he appears to have made no effort to save himself. When last seen by one of the few survivors, he was engaged in prayer on the quarter-deck. 'I heard,' he says, 'the minister who was on board call to those around him that, as there was no hope of safety, they should engage in prayer. He then began to pray, the rest of the passengers kneeling around him. He was as cool and as collected as I am now, and the others were praying too; but his voice was raised above the rest.' And *thus* with the great Father's name upon his lips, and the great Father's love warm in his dauntless heart, did this noble Christian man go down into the cold, bleak, midnight sea, to find his Father's bosom *there*."—*Pulpit Analyst*.

Ver. 32. "Ye did not believe."

Unbelief is spiritual death, and the desolation of manhood. In order to see this more fully, it may be observed that—

I. Unbelief *imprisons* or *confines* manhood. The feelings and aspirations, the longings and the hopes of man's higher nature, would go beyond the present and the visible, and faith alone can secure their fitting exercise; but unbelief holds them back, limits them, confines them to earth, and to things that are seen and temporal. It cramps the energies of being, and restrains the healthy outgoings of the soul. Such imprisonment of the spiritual powers much tend to desolation and decay.

II. Unbelief *starves* manhood; man needs truth to live upon as well as bread; but, as we have seen, he cannot of himself know all the truth; there must be faith as the means of the highest knowledge. God has come down to reveal Himself to us, and to supply this knowledge as the true and healthy aliment of our spiritual being. Christ is the "bread of life," the true bread that came down from heaven; but unbelief refuses it,—will not partake of it, so that the soul is starved; and surely this tends to spiritual destruction.

III. Unbelief *outrages* manhood; it

does it injury and violence. We say that man was formed for truth; hence to indulge in falsehood violates his true nature. Man was formed for reason, and to act irrationally is a violation of the true law of our being; so man was formed for faith, and to refuse faith where faith is due, where faith is essential, and where God Himself comes down to woo it and to gain it, is an outrage upon manhood. Such moral violence must tend to desolation and abiding darkness. —*Rev. James Spence, M.A.*

Ver. 32. "Ye did not believe the Lord your God." The truth wrapped up here is as important to the Christian as to the Jew—to-day, as when Moses uttered it. Here is implied, even if not definitely taught, the power of faith. By comparison with the context is discerned the fact that *faith* on the part of the people would have enabled God to have conquered their enemies (*cf.* Binney's book: "Practical Nature of Faith").

Ver. 32. "Yet in this ye did not believe." Not a small portion of the chapter is taken up with reminding the people of God's special intervention in their behalf. Though their whole history is full of divine action for them, God's mercies are quickly forgotten. They are ever ready to disobey His law, or to give allegiance to idols. Chastisements intended for repentance were not heeded. Such being ineffectual, God becomes angry and casts them off. There are three matters for consideration suggested by these words—

I. The possibility of dishonouring the great memories of life. "In *this* they did not believe God," even though they had had so many reasons why they should. Who could forget Egyptian bondage—the passage of the sea—the manna—cloud—fire, &c.? Who could forget the joy of deliverance—the rapture of ecstasy when God had revealed Himself, and had worked for them? Yet this people did! Though God had done so much, they did not believe His promise. Memories of life can be dishonoured—frequently are.

II. The possibility of underestimating the interposition of God. Look at the case suggested by the chapter (*cf.* Jer. ii. 5, 6). They had come through a terrible wilderness—land of desert and pits—of drought—a land where no man passed—no man dwelt—the shadow of death. Viewed prospectively, men shrink from such difficulties; viewed retrospectively, many of the terrors are forgotten. Though God had led through all this, all is forgotten. That such could have been forgotten is a revolting illustration of the soul's depravity. But human nature is such that the highest offices rendered by God and man can be lightly esteemed by it, and even the blood of the Covenant be trodden under foot.

III. The possibility of the leading minds of the Church being darkened and perverted. It seems that the whole nation, chiefs and people, were alike unmindful of the heavenly calling (*cf.* Jer. ii. 8). History of Israel at the time of Elijah. Epochs in the life of the Church, *e.g.*, the Reformation.

The Hebrew proverb said, "As priest as people." The saying may be reversed. As people so leaders; for the leader is often but the adroit follower. When he should stand up with a protest, too frequently such an one truckles to the popular cry. He worships the crowd, and leaves Truth and Right to take care of themselves. It behoves, therefore—

1. That such men should watch themselves with constant jealousy.

2. Such should never be forgotten by those who pray.

Ver. 32. "Yet in this ye did not believe," &c.

A charge of infidelity. This is quickly followed with the chastisement of infidelity. The wise learn by the woes of others. If the unfaithful be punished, it is not unreasonable to expect that the faithful are rewarded. From other Scripture we know that it is so (*cf.* Rev. ii. 10). Let us apply this in its Christian bearings.

I. Christ's religion requires faithfulness.

(a.) The Christian should make use of all his powers on behalf of religion.

(b.) The Christian should make use of all his powers for the religious circle wherein he lives.

(c.) The Christian should make use of all his powers according to the will of God.

II. Christ's religion requires personal fidelity. It mattered not that "Moses was faithful in all his house." God judged the people for what *they* were.

(a.) Every Christian has a personal work to accomplish.

(b.) Every Christian is endowed with power to accomplish his own work.

(c.) Every Christian is under a personal obligation to be faithful.

III. Christ's religion requires continual faithfulness. It must not be fitful. "*Watch*" was Christ's command.

(a.) Because the work is great.

(b.) Because the time is short.

IV. Christ's religion rewards faithfulness.

(a.) Religious reward is precious.

(b.) Religious reward is glorious.

(c.) Religious reward is durable.

(d.) Religious reward is personal.

*Folly of Infidelity.*—"And is it possible that you (Paine) should think so highly of your performance, as to believe that you have thereby demolished the authority of a book, which Newton himself esteemed the most authentic of all histories? Which by its celestial light illumines the darkest ages of antiquity; which is the touchstone whereby we are enabled to distinguish between true and fabulous theology; between the God of Israel, holy, just, and good, and the impious rabble of heathen Balaam; which has been thought by competent judges to have afforded matter for the laws of Solon, and a foundation for the philosophy of Plato; which has been illustrated by the labour of learning in all ages and in all countries, and been admired and venerated for its piety, its sublimity, and its veracity, by all who were able to read and understand it. Nor have you gone, indeed, through the word with the best intention in the world to cut it down; but you have busied yourself

merely in exposing to vulgar contempt a few unsightly shrubs, which good men had wisely concealed from public view. You have entangled yourself in thickets of thorn and briar; you have lost your way on the mountains of Lebanon, the goodly cedar trees whereof, lamenting the madness, and pitying the blindness of your rage against them, have scorned the blunt edge and the base temper of your axe, and laughed unhurt at the feebleness of your stroke. The Bible has withstood the learning of Porphyry, and the power of Julian, to say nothing of the Manichean Faustus. It has resisted the genius of Bolingbroke, and the wit of Voltaire, to say nothing of a numerous herd of inferior assailants; and it will not fall by your force. You have barbed anew the blunted arrows of former adversaries; you have feathered them with blasphemy and ridicule; dipped them in your deadliest poison; aimed them with your utmost skill; shot them against the shield of truth with your utmost vigour; but, like the feeble javelin of the aged Priam, they will scarcely reach the mark—will fall to the ground without a stroke.”—*Watson.*

#### *Infidelity barren of virtue.*

“This system is a soil as barren of great and sublime virtue as it is prolific in crimes.” . . . “As well might you expect exalted sentiments of justice from a professed gamester as look for noble principles in the man whose hopes and fears are all suspended on the present moment, and who stakes the whole happiness of his being on the events of this vain and fleeting life.” . . . “In affirming that infidelity is unfavourable to the higher class of virtues, we are supported as well by facts as by reasoning. We should be sorry to load our adversaries with unmerited reproach; but to what history, to what record, will they appeal, for any traits of moral greatness, any sacrifice of interest or life, any instances of daring heroic virtues exhibited by their disciples? Where shall we look for the trophies of infidel magnanimity or atheistical virtue? Not that we mean to accuse them of

inactivity: they have recently filled the world with the fame of their exploits; exploits of a very different kind indeed, but of imperishable memory and disastrous lustre.”—*R. Hall.*

#### *God's goodness, man's ingratitude.*

“It is storied of a certain king that, fighting a desperate battle for the recovery of his daughter stolen from him, he found but ill success, and the day utterly against him, till by the valour of a strange prince, disguised in the habit of a mean soldier (that pitied his loss and bore love to his daughter), he recovered both her and victory. Not long after, this prince received a wrong, which he brought to the king, that he might receive justice. The king handed him over to a judge. The prince replied, ‘Know this, O king, when *thou* wast lost, *I* stood betwixt thee and danger, and did not bid *another* save thee, but saved thee myself; behold the scars of those wounds I bore to free thee and thy state from ruin inevitable, and now my suit is before thee dost thou shuffle me off to another?’ Such was our case; Satan had stolen our dear daughter the soul,—in vain we laboured a recovery; principalities and powers were against us,—weakness and wretchedness on our side. Christ the Son of God took pity on us. Clad as a menial He stood between us and death. Yet, how frequently we bid Him stand by when He comes!”—(*Cf. Pulpit Illustrations.*)

#### *Unbelief unmans a man.*

“Take a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he is maintained by a man who is to him instead of a God, or at least *melior natura*; whereby it is manifest that the poor creature, without the confidence of a better nature than his own, could never be so courageous. Thus it is with man, when he rolleth himself upon God, and resteth on His divine perfection, then he gathers a force and ability which human nature itself could never attain; but when, with the fool, he says, there is “no God” [in other words, when he has lost all faith in God], then he destroys the nobility of man; for man



is akin to the beasts by his body; and if he is not akin to God by his soul, he is a base and ignoble creature. Atheism will unman any man, and deject anything that is the advancement of human nature." — *Gabriel Inchinus*, quoted in *Things New and Old*.

Vers. 32-34. "He did not believe." . . . "God was angry." . . . "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

"Of all the virgins presented to Ahasuerus none was so pleasing as Esther. "Let the maiden that *pleaseth* the king be queen instead of Vashti." When that decree was published, what strife, what emulation (may we think), was among the Persian damsels, that either were or thought themselves fair, every one hoped to be queen! But so incomparable was the beauty of that Jewess that she was not only taken into the Persian Court as one of the selected virgins, but had the most honourable place in all the seraglio allotted unto her. The other virgins pass their probation unregarded. When Esther's turn came, though she brought the same face and demeanour that nature had cast upon her, no eye saw her without admiration. The king was so delighted with her beauty, that, contemning all the other vulgar forms, his choice was fully fixed upon her. Thus *faith* is that Esther to which God holds out His golden sceptre. He is pleased with all graces: hot zeal and cool patience please Him; cheerful thankfulness and weeping repentance please Him; charity in the height, and humility in the dust, please Him; but none of them are welcome to Him without faith in Christ Jesus."

*Power of faith in the heart.*

"The philosopher, when he would persuade the king to settle his court and place of residence in the *heart* of his dominion, laid before him a bull's hide, ready tanned, upon which when he stood upon any one side of it, and so kept that down, the other side would rise up; when he removed to this side, that rose up and kept that down, then the side he came from would rise up; but when he stood in the middle he kept down all

alike." *Faith* is this king. When faith sits in the heart, then it keeps in check every passion—swamps every emotion—strengthens will—reins lust—in fine, cleaneth, invigorates, and rightens the whole man.

Ver. 33. We are told by a writer of world-wide fame, that a truly great man does not ask of another, is he great in some particular, but is *he* great? True *self-greatness* is a goal worthy of all. "Greater is he that ruleth himself than he that taketh a city." Ancient and modern concur. But a man is only great as he has divinity in his nature. Greatness of character is divinity humanised. And the man who is anything is what he is by the help of God. "By the grace of God I am what I am." He is the man who has God ever before him, and round about him, and behind, to open, prepare, and close the way. He has God as a light by night—a cloud by day. Eminently does the principle in the text work itself out in the Christian life. For—

I. The Christian is one pressing forward to the truest greatness man can know—the perfect man in Christ.

1. He is possessed of the faith that energises and supplies the weakest man with the grace that eventuates in success.

2. He shows the reality of his faith in his life by the manifestations of Christian character and disposition.

3. Such a life sheds so much light upon the path he has to travel, that in his heart is a perennial spring of hope.

II. Moses, as well as the apostle, recognises God as the source of all real strength and power in life.

1. By God's help they had overcome their foes.

2. God is with them in cloud and fire.

3. God would ultimately bring them into the promised land.

4. The result of life is not simply the product of natural causes. It is Christ that *lives within*; God who *works through us*.

III. The consciousness of this fact becomes an abiding help.

1. Natural energy is not *abiding*. We are liable to lose it any moment.



A fever robs the brain of knowledge. Heat impairs strength. The *flesh* has ever been felt to be an enemy of the spirit.

2. The grace of God is present in all changes. Paul felt it when the thorn pierced him; it was abundant in the prison, and burst forth as music in his heart; it nerved him in the presence of foes, judges, and even Cæsar. To individual Christians it is powerful to hold back from sin when tempted—restrains fear—aids in pressing forward.

“Went before us in the way.” (Compare vers. 30–33 with Ps. xlv. 1–3.) Verse 1 of Ps. xlv. might well be used as strophe, and verse 2 as antistrophe, of Moses’ song of his faith and triumph. Deal with the spiritual bearings of the text.

I. The circumambient God is to the Christian a refuge—strength—help.

1. God a refuge.

(a.) Refuge in the Mediator—Christ.

(b.) Refuge in the gospel of His love.

(c.) Refuge for eternity.

2. God as strength.

(a.) By His Spirit.

(b.) By promise and encouragement.

(c.) By means of grace.

3. God a help.

(a.) A Father to provide.

(b.) A searcher of life’s way.

II. The *confidence* of the believer in God as his Preparer and Provider.

1. God prepares the way.

2. God provides what is necessary.

3. *Past* supplies an earnest of *future*.

4. The sense of Providence strengthens.

Ver. 33. “*Night*.” Subjects in connection with night.

*Night a revealer of God.*

(a.) The day with its earthly light reveals the world.

(b.) The darkness of night shuts out the world.

(c.) The mind in its restlessness seeks other fields of knowledge.

(d.) In its reachings away from the world the heart has at times found its God.

The joys of night.

(a.) It brings sleep.

(b.) Sleep shuts out care.

(c.) Sorrow once removed by sleep has had a fang extracted.

Terrors of night. Songs of night. Night lost in day. (*Cf.* G. Gilfillan’s poem, “*Night*.”)

*Night.* “Night appears to be a time peculiarly favourable to devotion. Its solemn stillness helps to free the mind from that perpetual din which the cares of the world will bring around it; and the stars, looking down from heaven upon us, shine as if they would attract us up to God. I know not how you may be affected by the solemnities of midnight, but when I have sat alone musing on the great God and the mighty universe, I have felt that indeed I could worship Him; for night seemed to be spread abroad as a very temple for adoration, while the moon walked as high priest amid the stars, the worshippers and I myself joined in that silent song which they sang unto God: ‘Great art Thou, O God! great in Thy works. When I consider Thy heavens the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?’ I find that this sense of the power of midnight not only acts upon religious men, but there is a certain poet, whose character, perhaps, I could scarcely too much reprobate: a man very far from understanding true religion; one whom I may, I suppose, justly style an infidel, a libertine of the worst order, and yet he says concerning night in one of his poems:—

‘Tis midnight on the mountains brown,  
The cold round moon shines deeply down;  
Blue rolls the waters, blue the sky  
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,  
Bespangled with those isles of light,  
So wildly, spiritually bright;  
Who ever gazed upon them shining,  
And turned to earth without repining,  
Nor wished for wings to flee away,  
And mix with their eternal ray.’

“Even with the most irreligious person, a man farthest from spiritual thought, it seems that there is some power in the

grandeur and stillness of night to draw him up to God. I trust many of us can say, like David, 'I have thought upon Thee continually; I have mused upon Thy name in the night watches, and with desire have I desired Thee in the night.'"

—*Spurgeon.*

Vers. 34-39. The good among the evil.

I. True goodness can exist amid circumstances most corrupt (*cf.* the case of the son of Jeroboam, 1 Kings xiv. 13). Sardis was one of the most dissolute cities of antiquity; but *here* were Christians (Rev. iii. 4).

"They say that lilies, or roses, or such like pleasant flowers, if they be planted by garlic or onions, or such like unsavoury things, they do not lose but rather increase in their former sweetness. So it is with good and godly men when they are planted, and as it were hemmed in with wicked men, the vileness and odiousness of their wickedness makes them to loathe wickedness so much the more, and to love godliness, and to bless God that hath kept them, that they have not run to the same excess of riot."—*Things New and Old.*

II. True goodness will ultimately be distinguished by a glorious reward. Caleb and Joshua were true to the good spirit within. They wrought righteousness. The reward came. Caleb entered the promised land; Joshua became the people's leader.

(a.) It has its reward here in its influence over others. Justin Martyr confesses that he left philosophy and became a Christian, through the admiration that he had for the innocent and holy lives of Christians.

(b.) It has a reward in the blessedness it brings to the man himself.

Ver. 34. "The Lord heard . . . was wroth."

God hears. He judges. Judgment comes quick and sure at times. Some indifferent to it. Some disbelieve. God hears and is angry.

I. The anger of the Lord is moved by the wickedness of man. He is not indifferent to it.

II. That the Day of Judgment will come to all.

III. Let men prepare for this Day of Judgment, lest it be a day of wrath.

Ver. 34. "The Lord heard . . . was angry."

Three homiletic points—

I. The principle of discernment is ever operative in the Divine economy. God heard the voice of murmur and was angry.

II. Escape from this principle impossible. God is omniscient. He sees all; hears all; knows all.

III. Those who comply with the will of God have nothing to fear from this principle. There is rather a cause of joy. God knows your toils—sorrows—difficulties. He watches with pleasure every conquest.

"The Lord heard." The omniscience of God; but God is omniscient because omnipresent. "We feel conscious that there is no place in heaven above, or on earth beneath, from whence God is excluded: we feel conscious that in the deepest vale, as well as on the mountain top; in subterranean caverns, as well as open plains; when surrounded by the darkness of midnight, as well as the splendour of noon-day, He is around us and knows us: we feel conscious that if we could transport ourselves with the rapidity of lightning from our present local habitation to the extreme verge of the habitable globe, that we should not be able to light on a single spot, and take our stand and say, 'Here, His eye shall not see us; here, His ear shall not hear us; here, His justice cannot overtake us; here, His grace cannot save us.'"—*East.*

"In every part and place of the universe we perceive the exertions of a power which we believe to proceed from the Deity. In what part or point of space that has ever been explored do we not discover attractions? In what region do we not find light? What kingdom is there of nature, what corner of space, in which there is anything that can be examined by us, while we do not fall upon contrivance or design? An

agency so general as that we cannot discover its absence, or assign the place in some effects of its continued energy is not found, must be ascribed to a being who is omnipresent. He who upholds all things by His power, may be said to be everywhere present.”—*Paley*.

“Is there no necessity of control over the powers of the atmosphere, or of the ocean? What would be the situation of the inhabitants of our world, if exposed to their resistless force, in the entire absence of the control of a presiding mind—a guardian Deity? Think of the innumerable processes which are incessantly going forward in the life and growth of animals and of vegetables, and can you imagine these to proceed with undeviating uniformity, without infinite knowledge to direct infinite power? Conceive, then, of the Divine omniscience as necessarily commensurate with the exertions of omnipotence, and the extent of omnipresence.”—*Burder*.

Vers. 34–41. Sin and its recompense.

“The tale of the Goblet, which the genius of a heathen fashioned, was true, and taught a moral of which many a death-bed furnishes the melancholy illustration. Having made the model of a serpent, he fixed it in the bottom of the cup. Coiled for a spring, a pair of gleaming eyes in its head, and in its open mouth fangs raised to strike, it lay beneath ruby wine. Nor did he who raised that golden cup to quench his thirst and quaff the delicious draught suspect what lay below, till, as he reached the dregs, that dreadful head arose and glistened before his eyes. So, when life’s cup is nearly emptied, and sin’s last pleasure quaffed, and unwilling lips are draining the bitter dregs, shall rise ghastly terrors of remorse, and death, and judgment upon the despairing soul.”—*Guthrie*.

Ver. 36. “Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh.” Subject: The reward of righteousness.

Caleb, in conjunction with the other eleven spies, had important work entrusted to him. He and Joshua alone were brave and righteous in the conduct of their services. God was angry with

the wrong-doers, and punished them: with Caleb and Joshua He was pleased, and them He rewarded. Caleb was allowed to enter the promised land, where he subsequently obtained good possessions.

I. The reward of the righteous in the case of all is inexpressibly great. “Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded” (2 Chron. xv. 7). “Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight (Ps. xviii. 24). “Every one that hath forsaken houses or brethren, &c., . . . shall receive an hundredfold, and inherit everlasting life” (Matt. xix. 29; cf. Mark x. 29, 30, and note variations).

II. The reward of righteousness is invariably obtained in connection with labour. (Cf. “Why stand ye here all the day idle?” Matt. xx. 6, with “Call the labourers, and give them their hire,” xx. 8). Work is God’s condition of prosperity. Labour enhances the enjoyment of life. Indolence brings ruin to individuals and states; to the body, intellect, spirit. The men who will be rewarded on the Day of Judgment will not be those whose religion consisted in hearing sermons, seeking comfort, uttering sentimental sympathies and offering prayers; but those who make all “means of grace” to be channels for carrying into reality and life the purposes God has inspired in the heart.

Ver. 37. “Lord angry with me,” &c. “So aggravated was your guilt that it not only brought ruin on yourselves, but displeasure on your leader.”—*Clapham*.

Cf. Achan’s sin (Josh. vii. 15, 24, 25). His family was involved with him in his punishment. “Sins of fathers visited on the children,” &c.

“The Lord angry with me.” Some thing very pathetic and touching in these words. The old lawgiver, we could imagine, would look back over his long life—that life so full of vicissitude; which, though so long and eventful, was yet incomplete; for the people were still in the desert. Another must



lead them into the promised land. But amid the clouds of sadness three gleams of light may be discerned—

I. Life is ending in the midst of labour.

II. Life is ending in the midst of prospect.

III. Life is ending in the midst of strength.

“For *your* sakes.” “Here we see, as it were, the *other* side of the event narrated in Num. xx. 10. *There* the unbelief of Moses and Aaron bears the blame; yet the unbelief was called forth by the invincible perverseness of the people. Moses, therefore, was punished because he had not kept himself entirely free from the infection of the sin of the people, but the people had reason to reckon their sin on the part of Moses as occasioned by their fault.”—*Gerlach*.

Ver. 37. “The Lord was angry with *me* for *your* sakes.” This, read in conjunction with Isaiah liii. 5, brings before our notice one of the most startling facts in the whole universe of being;—the fact and principle of vicarious suffering (*cf.* John xi. 49–52). Men may think the idea of vicarious sacrifice inconsistent with Divine perfection, but there is the *fact*. In standing on the platform which accepts this idea, we are not compelled to satisfy all the scruples of those standing on a platform advocating a theory in opposition as to the righteousness or unrighteousness of any act of God. Sufficient for man, if God do it. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Man is a fraction of a whole, as well as an unit. Shall the head complain because when one with the hand it suffers? It is one with it in joy! True wisdom is to know that this principle works in human life, and to make the best of the knowledge.

1. The vicarious principle is a law of physical life.

1. The mineral kingdom is food for the vegetable.

2. The vegetable supports the animal.

3. The herbivorous food for the car-

nivorous. This not an effect of sin. (*Cf.* the teachings of geology.)

4. All fall before the rule of man. These each provide nourishments for his body whereon his mind and soul live.

II. The vicarious principle a law of intellectual life—

1. The enjoyment and instruction of the reader is only attained at the price of the author's suffering and experience.

2. The congregation's repast on the Sabbath is at the cost of the preacher's brain and life and suffering.

3. The civilisation of to-day is obtained by the labour and peril of the past.

4. The position, gain, education, &c., of the child is at the price of the parents' toil or self-denial.

III. This vicarious principle also a law of spiritual life—

1. By sympathy we take some of the sorrow out of another heart into our own, and thereby afford relief.

2. Seeing that the principle is both in the regions of the material and the mental, the gospel makes no greater claim upon our faith when it asks us to believe that such a principle is active in the region of the spiritual also.

*God can be provoked to anger.*—“The gods of the Gentiles were senseless stocks and stones, not able to apprehend, much less to revenge an injury done unto them. Well, therefore, might the philosopher be bold with Hercules, to put him to his thirteenth labour, in seething of his dinner; and Martial with Priapus, in threatening to throw him into the fire, if he looked not well to his trees. A child may play at the hole of a dead asp, and a silly woman may strike a dead lion; but who dare play with a living serpent? Who dare take a roaring lion by the beard? Let Christians take heed how they provoke the living God, for He is a consuming fire, and with the breath of His mouth He is able to throw down the whole frame of nature, and destroy all creatures from the face of the earth.”—*Things New and Old*.



A good prince no advantage to a bad people.—“We see that, though the sun be above the horizon, and so apt to make a glorious day, yet many fogs and mists arising from the earth, overcast the sky, and intercept the comfortable influence of the light. Even so, though God vouchsafe never so good a prince, a prince under whom the people enjoy abundance of peace, and the free passage of the gospel, such may be their gracelessness that they may be the better for neither of them.”—*Things New and Old*.

Ver. 38. “But Joshua, &c. . . . he shall cause Israel to inherit.”

Joshua had done *one* thing well that God had given him; work of a higher order is therefore intrusted to him. His conduct in spying the land was good: he is to complete his first duty, spying, by leading the people into possessing the land. The five *talents* faithfully used prepares the way for the rule of five *cities*.

Here we have an illustration of service for God being rewarded. Two considerations—

I. The reasonableness of service for God.

II. The reward of such service.

I. The reasonableness of service for God.

1. In every state of life the condition of true honour is faithful service. True honour is not a matter of birth or place. It is had only by becoming honourable, by submitting to service, toil, self-sacrifice. The man ambitious to be erudite must toil through the drudgery of the preliminary work: the chemist in the laboratory; the soldier in drill-room and battle-field; statesman in cabinet. Men will not suffer others to label themselves gold if only brass.

2. In proportion to the greatness of the honour is the rigidity of the condition.

3. If we seek honour of God, it is but reasonable that we should be prepared with service of some kind; and the higher the honour we crave from Christ, the more devoted must we be to Him and to His service. To sit on His right hand

and on His left is only for those worthy of it (*cf.* Matt. xx. 23).

II. The reward of such service.

1. The reward will be proportionate, not only to the worth of the servant, but to the greatness of the giver. Kings bestow royal gifts (*cf.* Ahasuerus and Mordecai). “What shall be done unto the man whom *the king* delighteth to honour?”

2. The reward will be somewhat of the nature of the receiver's worth. Joshua's service was fidelity to his nation: his reward was a national honour: he was made a chief. The Christian's service is fidelity to Christ; his reward, therefore, will be the honour of the crowned Christ in the Day of Triumph.

Ver. 38. “Thou shalt not go in thither.” In other words, “Thou shalt die in the desert.” These words must have fallen on Moses as one of those thunder-claps of unexpectedness that are made the more powerful by their rarity; but which no one is anxious to make more familiar by repetition. The people were soon to enter the promised land; therefore Moses knew that he was soon to die. The subject pressed on our attention is the imminence of death. Death may be impending physically, morally, socially, influentially.

Physically: Breath is in the nostrils, but we know not the hair-breadth escapes from death. A needle point might destroy the life of the body.

Morally: Character may be ruined in a moment. One sin broke up human history into ruin, sorrow, &c.

Socially: When character is ruined society is closed against a man.

Influentially: A man's influence should be the measure of his moral standing. By one false step influence may be impaired or even destroyed. Since death is so near, and in so many ways imminent, the following considerations may not be ill-timed:—

I. High significance and value should be given to time. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. What is life? A brief day, a solemn destiny. Eternity turns upon the present. Direction is now given for all the future.

II. The most anxious vigilance should be aroused. When death is near, it is only a *step* (1 Sam. xx. 3), and might be the *next*! "Be sober, be vigilant."

III. The thought of death should stimulate to preparedness for the future. The most careless make some preparation for the immediate wants of the present and the future. The appetites and body are provided for. Death thunders out, "The spirit must be provided for." The soul's preparation is made by our sustaining each day a right relation to Him, into whose presence death ushers us.

IV. It should inspire a tender interest into life and all its relationships. We hold our blessings for but a moment, then they are gone. Home, friendship, Christian service—they are soon folded in a pall. Life is too short for man to be hard on man. Those with us are soon gone. An eternity of tears will not wash out one act of cruelty.

V. The prospect of death should lead to a right use of temporal possessions. There is only one world in which we have money. We touch it only *once*. We can hoard it for selfish uses: we can spend it in the service of Christ.

"Ah! in what perils is vain life engaged!

What slight neglects, what trivial faults destroy

The hardest frame! Of indolence, of toil

We die; of want, of superfluity.

The all-surrounding heaven, the vital air,  
Is big with death."

"*Death*.—Death is, in itself, a most serious and distressing event. It is nature's supreme evil, the abhorrence of God's creation—a monster, from whose touch every living thing recoils; so that to shrink from its ravages upon ourselves, or upon those whom we love, is not an argument of weakness, but an act of obedience to the first law of being—a tribute to the value of that life which is our Maker's gift. The disregard which some of old affected to whatever goes by the name of evil; the insensibility of others, who yielded up their souls to the power of fatalism; and the artificial gaiety, which has occasionally played the comedian about the dying bed of 'philosophy, falsely so called,' are outrages upon decency and nature.

Death destroys both action and enjoyment—mocks at wisdom, strength, and beauty—disarranges our plans—robs us of our treasure—desolates our bosoms—breaks our heartstrings—blasts our hopes. Death extinguishes the glow of kindness—abolishes the most tender relations of man—severs him from all that he knows and loves—subjects him to an ordeal which thousands of millions have passed, but none can explain; and what will be as new to the last, who gives up the ghost, as it was to murdered Abel,—flings him, in fine, without any avail from the experience of others, into a state of untried being. No wonder that nature trembles before it; reason justifies the fear; religion never makes light of it; and he who does, instead of ranking with heroes, can hardly deserve to rank with a brute."—*Mason*.

Ver. 39. "Moreover your little ones . . . they shall go in thither," &c.

A beautiful example of the children bringing honour to the parent. The fathers by their sin brought disgrace upon their name. They die in the desert. *The children enter the promised land.*

A very striking illustration of this is found in the reward of the oaken crown among the ancient Romans. The civic crown was the foundation of many privileges. He who had once obtained it, had a right to wear it always. When he appeared at the public spectacles, the senators rose up to do him honour. He was placed near their bench; *and his father, and his grandfather by the father's side, were entitled to the same privilege.*

Ver. 38. Joshua became heir to the title and position of Moses, in preference even to his own children, if he had any now living. (*Cf. this with what Plutarch tells us.* "It was customary with the Romans of that age (the time of Coriolanus), when they were drawn up in order of battle, and ready to take up their shields and gird their garments about them, to make a nuncupative will, naming each his heir, in the presence of three or four witnesses.")

Ver. 41. "We have sinned."

Thence: conscience conqueror.

(We supplement the Hints of the preceding Writer on CHAP. i. 1-38.)

### REVIEW OF THE PAST.—Verses 1-5.

“Live on the past,” said Napoleon ; but the past of his life afforded little help to him. Moses here reviews the past history of Israel in its remarkable places and conflicts—repeats, explains, and enforces the commands of God, and reminds them of God’s mercy to prompt them to duty.

**I. It is helpful to review the past.** The lessons of the past are gathered not into oblivion, but to be fruitful in the present and the future. The histories and events of former times confirm our faith, and encourage us to hope and trust in God. 1. *In remarkable places.* In the *wilderness*, amid dearth, distress, and poverty. In the *plain*, well watered and cultivated spots of encampment. Against the *Red Sea*, amid wonders of God’s presence and power which should never be forgotten. Life’s journey not all a barren desert ;—there are many beautiful scenes and fruitful seasons, many deliverances from enemies, and many displays of Divine favour. 2. *In remarkable times.* (a) *After long delays.* “In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month,” after deliverance from Egypt. The delay through sin, which brings trouble and unfitness for duty. (b) *After conflicts and trials.* Sihon slain in opposing their onward march (Num. xxi. 24 ; Deut. ii. 32). Og, king of Bashan, without provocation rushed to attack, and was defeated. By the destruction of these kings God pledges to help his people, puts them under deep obligation to obey, and encourages them to further effort.

**II. It is needful to review the past.** From the past we must get our examples, precedents, and principles. The past alone will interpret the present, and we cannot get rid of its influences and results. 1. *Our mental condition makes it needful.* The generation that came out of Egypt had died. There were many children in Israel who only knew a little of God’s law and dealings with them. Hence the need of repetition. We are children mentally and morally. God teaches by past history. “Precept upon precept, precept upon precept,” etc. (Isaiah xxviii. 10). 2. *Our present surroundings make it needful.* Israel was surrounded by idolatrous nations, and would be exposed to seductive influences in the land of Canaan. We have need to be warned against worldly customs and sin’s devices—to have the law of God written in our hearts (Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20). 3. *Our immediate future makes it needful.* Israel was about to go into new circumstances of life ; to become soldiers, and to cease to be pilgrims. Their strength was to rely upon God and follow him. What He had done in the past He could do in the future. He will pardon sin, deliver from danger, and give rest and rewards.

### THE ENFORCEMENT OF DUTY.—Verses 5-8.

Long enough had the Israelites remained at Horeb. The end was accomplished for which they were led thither. Their work was not yet finished ; the land was not possessed, hence the command, “take your journey and go.” Duty should be the end and aim of the highest life. The greatest pleasure is derived from a consciousness of its fulfilment. It has sustaining power in life, and at life’s end, says George Herbert, it “gives music at midnight.”



**I. Duty explained.** Moses began to *declare, i.e.,* to explain. We must know before we can act. God has not left us to grope or guess our way in the dark. In the Bible we have a full revelation of God's will and the path of duty opened so plainly that "wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein." Nature and Philosophy are dim lights. Here we have the light of life, the true light which shineth unto every man coming into the world.

**II. Duty enforced.** When we know, we are reluctant to do the right. We all know more than we practice, and have need of the enforcement of duty by every possible motive. 1. *By present needs.* Long enough at rest, now rouse yourselves to work. We have not to serve God in retirement, but in publicity. Peter was not permitted to dwell on the mount, but sent to confess and serve Christ among men. Israel had now received the Covenant, been trained for a new social position, and they must go to their lawful sphere to adorn their privileges. 2. *By removing hindrances to its performance.* The land before you, *lit.,* before your faces. It is accessible; you can see it, and there is no difficulty in the way, but which you may easily overcome. The promise and the kindness of God should be enough to stir us up. 3. *By the express command of God.* The land was given to their fathers by promise. They were now trained for it, and should no longer delay in taking it. "Go in and possess the land."

#### THE CHOICE OF OFFICERS.—Verses 9–18.

Israel had now greatly increased, and Moses felt the affairs too heavy for him to bear alone. He appeals to them as if in a dying wish to select men to help him to judge and act as public officers. The rules for the choice, and the instructions as to method, are worthy of the most enlightened ages of Christendom.

**I. The qualifications which they are to possess.** This is most important, every man is not fit to be a magistrate. Jethro knew this and gave a four-fold qualification. "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness" (Ex. xviii. 21). These officers were to be—1. *Men of intelligence.* "Wise men and understanding"—men of skill and tact. Administration without wisdom will not be successful. Unskilful men holding the reigns of government may be like Phæton, the son of Sol, who insisted on driving the fiery steeds and sent horses and chariot spinning through boundless space. 2. *Men of good repute.* "Known among your tribes,"—men who had gained a reputation for honesty and straight-forwardness in daily life. 3. *Men who fear God.* Those who act for God should not only have the confidence of the people, but the Spirit of God in them. "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

**II. The Spirit in which they are to act.** The rules applicable at first to the law of Moses, are in spirit and letter fitted to guide all human judgments. 1. *To hear patiently.* "Hear the causes." How many hasty, impulsive judgments are given without a patient candid hearing? "Judge not according to appearance, but righteous judgment." 2. *To judge impartially.* No respect of persons in judgment. The great and the small, the orphan and friendless, the weak and the powerful, were to be treated in justice and equity. 3. *To act fearlessly.* "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man." Lack of courage leads to perversion of justice. "There lies one who never feared the face of man" was the eulogy on Knox, the reformer. 4. *To act under a sense of responsibility to God.* "The judgment is God's." Judges were holy persons, sitting in the place of God and exalted to dispense the power of God. "Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment" (2 Chron. xix. 6).



**III. The method in which they are installed.** The people approved of the suggestion, and acted upon it. "The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do." 1. *They were chosen by the people.* "Take you" (ver. 13). Many say that it is dangerous to extend the suffrage—to invest power into the hands of the people. But neither the Jewish polity nor the Christian Church teaches us to ignore them. (cf. Acts vi. 1-4.) 2. *They were appointed by Moses.* "I will make them rulers over you." All scribes, superintendents, and chiefs were instituted by him. Moses ratified the people's choice. 3. *They were confirmed by the Spirit of God.* The judgment was God's. The judges were not only respected by the people, but aided by the Spirit of God. "I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee." (Num. xi. 17.)

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 3, 4. *Remarkable times and places.*

1. Reminding of past transgressions.  
2. Indicating noble achievements. Sihon and Og slain. Great cities taken (Num. xxi. 33). "Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings" (Ps. cxxxv. 10, 11). 3. Stimulating to noble efforts. Og, a giant, friend, and ally to Sihon. Edrei, the second capital of Og, strongly fortified, yet notwithstanding artificial defence, natural advantage, and military prowess, taken by Israel (Deut. iii. 1). "Through God we shall do valiantly."

Ver. 6. *Long enough.* Needless delay. 1. In the world away from God. The place of sin, Satan's service and misery. Why remain here? God invites, urges you to come to Him. 2. In spiritual bondage and perplexity. Many distressed in mind, in terror and bondage, under the mount, like Bunyan's pilgrim. Christ gives liberty. 3. In present position and attainments.

Many children in knowledge, when they ought to be advanced, mature and fit to teach. Long enough in idleness and present position. Go on.

Vers. 10, 11. *Spiritual increase and prosperity.* 1. Spiritual prosperity the gift of God. God hath multiplied you—therefore fulfilled His promise, displayed His power and grace. 2. Spiritual prosperity promised by God. "As He hath promised you." 3. Spiritual prosperity should be sought. "The Lord make you a thousand times more."

Vers. 9-13. *Ministerial and lay agency in the Christian Church.* cf. Jethro's advice to Moses (Ex. xviii. 19-23). 1. Lay agency needful. Ministers "not able" to overtake the work. 2. Lay agency advantageous. It relieves from "burden," "cumbrance;" facilitates business and promotes order. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates," etc. (Deut. xvi. 18).

## THE HEAVENLY PROPOSAL.—Verse 21.

We may transfer what is here said to the Jews to ourselves. Canaan was typical of a better country—a heavenly.

Observe *the Exhibition*. "Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee." Where? In the Scriptures: not in full developement, for it is a glory to be revealed, but in its general nature, and in a way adapted to our present apprehensions, and likely to take hold of our mind. Hence many figures are employed, all of which aid our conceptions, while they fall short of the subject.

But does God place it before our eyes to tantalize us by awakening notice, drawing forth admiration, and exciting desire when the boon is not within our reach?

Observe *the command*. "Go up and possess it as the Lord God of thy fathers said unto thee." This supposes it to be attainable: yea it makes the attainment our duty. Missing it is not only misery, but crime. We shall be punished for neglecting so great salvation. It is our guilt—the guilt of the vilest disobedience to the most gracious authority; for he not only allows, but enjoins us to seek first his kingdom and righteousness—and commands us to believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ. Are we doing *this*? For *He* is the way, and we come unto God by Him.

Observe *the encouragement*: "Fear not, neither be discouraged." To this we are liable on two accounts. *First*, by a sense of our unworthiness. The greatness of the blessedness, combined with a sense of our desert, astonishes the mind, and makes hope seem like presumption. But everything is free, and designed to show the exceeding riches of His grace. We are as welcome as we are unworthy, why, then, refuse to be comforted? *Secondly*, by a sense of our weakness. Who is sufficient for the distance, the difficulties, and the dangers? The Jews were dismayed at the report of the spies. The towns were walled up to heaven. Before the Anakims *we* are but as grasshoppers. The people were disheartened, but said Caleb, "Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are able." How did he mean? Without God? No. But with Him as their leader and keeper—and this He had promised. Has He not said to you, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will keep thee." We cannot be too sensible of our weakness; but let us remember that His grace is sufficient for us. It has been sufficient for all gone before us. Jordan rolled between the Jews. It was overflowing its bank at the time. But the ark divided the waters. They went through dry shod, and their enemies were still as a stone till they were clean passed over.—*From Jay.*

#### THE NATURE OF UNBELIEF.—*Verses 22-40.*

It was through obedience to God that Canaan was to be inherited. But many times in their journey did Israel rebel. Moses recapitulates, but specially mentions the open rebellion at Kadesh-barnea, for which they were doomed to wander and die in the wilderness. When they had come to the very borders they hesitated in unbelief—proposed that men should survey the land and report. Moses approved and God permitted a step which shows the sinful nature and the terrible consequences of unbelief. The nature of unbelief is seen.

**I. In contriving what is unneedful.** Why send spies when they were about to enter the land? Why rely upon their own devices when God had helped them all through their journey? Why glance too much into the future, instead of acting in present duty? "If you constantly make the best use of the present hour, you are sure to be prepared for those which follow," says Fenelon.

**II. In relying more upon numbers than upon evidence.** All brought the fruit of the land. But the people believed the report of the ten and not the two, and cried in outrageous rebellion "Let us make a captain, and return into Egypt (Neh. ix. 17). "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

**III. In misinterpreting the Providence of God.** "Because the Lord hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt." O, what perversion of God's dealings! Had God forgotten His word? Did He wish to "destroy" and not to bless them? But when we measure God according to our narrow views, and read His ways with an unbelieving heart, we are sure to err and make invidious reflections upon his love.

**IV. In blinding against the help of God.** Moses exhorted them not to be afraid, for God was with them and would fight for them. All was in vain (vers. 29, 30). Rebellion blinds the mind, and we can neither discern God in the past nor present. Let us not blame the Jews. We are weak in faith, and full of prudent inventions in personal and social affairs. We "trust God when we can trace him"—take one-sided views, and reproach God with ungrateful conduct.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF.—*Verses 26-40.*

God had sustained and guarded His people in the greatest difficulties. He was continually with them, but unbelief was followed by open rebellion, and the Israelites were, in the righteous judgment of God, doomed to die in the wilderness. The consequences of unbelief may be seen in its different steps of development.

**I. It creates positive disobedience to God.** "In this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God." Alienation of heart from God, leads to doubt and distrust and if we have no love, no faith in God, how can we obey Him? We have within us a sinful, faithless heart, "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

**II. It leads to open rebellion against God.** Unbelief broke forth into murmuring and open disorder. They cast reproach and dishonor upon God. Unbelief perverts the truth of God, defies the authority of God and despises the threatening of God. "They were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs."

**III. It rouses the anger of God.** "The Lord was angry." Notwithstanding His great love, God displayed His righteous retribution. Our fellow creatures will defend their honour, human government will uphold their authority, so God must punish sin. "How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness and grieve Him in the desert?"

**IV. It excludes from the inheritance of God.** That unbelieving generation with two exceptions, were excluded from Canaan. God swore in his wrath, and the decision could not be overturned. "They shall not enter into My rest." Those who disobey and persist in their folly will be excluded from heaven. "Let us therefore fear" (Heb. iv. 1).

ENCOURAGEMENT.—*Verse 38.*

Joshua was appointed to succeed Moses, and lead Israel into Canaan (*cf.* Num. xxvii. 15-23). His work was difficult, and he would need help and encouragement. The people are exhorted to strengthen and obey him.

**I. The text supposes that difficulties will be encountered.** In the Christian life there are many obstacles. 1. *Difficulties made by ourselves.* How numerous these are. 2. *Difficulties arising from the conduct of others.* 3. *Difficulties expressly sent by God to test His servants.*

**II. The text gives a command to surmount these difficulties.** "Encourage him." We should encourage our fellow Christians. 1. *To meet their trials with patience.* 2. *Steadily to fight till they conquer them.* 3. *To profit by them.*

**III. The text contains a lesson for every Christian preacher and teacher.** "Encourage"—1. *The penitent sinner.* 2. *The young believer.* 3. *The well-tried saint.*—*Adapted from J. W. Macdonald.*



COMING NEAR YET FALLING SHORT.—*Verses 41–46.*

Israel had left Egypt, endured toil and privation in the wilderness, and were now on the threshold of the inheritance, but failed in duty, and were driven back into the desert to weep in vain. Their opportunity was lost, and their daring presumption ended in sad disgrace. We have here—

**I. Confession without true penitence.** “We have sinned against the Lord.” Their sorrow was not sincere. It arose not from a sense of guilt, but from the difficulties and dangers into which they were involved. The grief of Judas not of Peter. There may be confession of folly without true penitence; resolution to amend without renewal of heart. Repentance often comes too late, and avails nothing in the sight of God.

**II. Presumption in the garb of zeal.** Grieved at the prospect before them, yet still rebellious and self-willed, they determine to “go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us.” What professed regard to God, when all the time they acted with levity. “They presumed to go up” (Num. xiv. 44). Their zeal sprang from a wrong feeling, was based on a wrong principle, and led to disastrous results. “They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”

**III. Effort without Divine help.** In spite of warning, and in direct opposition to God’s command they went up, but were driven before the enemy, who chased and slew them with the ferocity of furious bees disturbed in the hive. Rashness is not reliance upon God. All undertakings in defiance of God’s will—all efforts without God’s help will fail. Every godless endeavour, every opposition to His authority, will bring displeasure upon those who persist. Those who run without being sent, those who fight without Divine commission will meet with awful defeat. Beware, “lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 19–21. *The way to rest.* 1. Through the wilderness, in trial, affliction, and discipline, reminding of God’s goodness and human ingratitude. (a). Courageously travelled. (b). Under Divine guidance. 2. By Divine command. God teaches, leads, and helps. “God commanded us.”

Vers. 29–31. *The confidence of faith.* 1. Based on past experience. (a). Of God’s help. “According to all that He did for you in Egypt.” (b). Of God’s goodness. “The Lord thy God bare thee.” 2. Assured of safety for the future. “Dread not, neither be afraid.”

Vers. 32, 33. *God a Pioneer*, going before us in life. 1. To appoint a locality for residence. As he searched out the land of Canaan, so now He fixes “the bounds of habitation” (Acts

xvii. 26). 2. To appoint a place of usefulness. “I have chosen you and ordained you” (*lit.* put you, set you in your sphere). John xv. 16. 3. To arrange events in life. “Hath determined the times before appointed (arranged beforehand).” Acts xvii. 26.

Vers. 34–38. *The faithful two.* 1. Distinguished in their conduct. Faithful, fearless, and Godlike. Caleb “followed the Lord wholly” (*cf.* Num. xiv. 24). Joshua firm and true amid general defection. “We must, in a course of obedience to God’s will, and of service to His honour,” says Matthew Henry, “follow Him *universally*, without dividing; *uprightly*, without dissembling; *cheerfully*, without disputing; and *constantly*, without declining; and this is following the Lord fully.” 2. Distinguished in their rewards. Caleb in the ranks of the people was spared to



enter the land which his seed possessed (*cf.* Num. xiv. 2). Joshua, a servant of Moses, was chosen to succeed him and lead Israel into Canaan. "Many are called, but few chosen."

Ver. 39. *Little ones cared for.* 1. Delivered from anticipated evils. "Which ye said should be a prey." 2. Rewarded with unexpected good. "They shall go in thither."

Vers. 40-42. *The battle is the Lord's*

1. Then do not fight without his presence. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." 2. Do not enlist without his call. "Lo, we be here and will go up;" but God had not called them there. God had said, "go not up, neither fight, for I am not among you." 3. To rush into any undertaking without God will end in defeat. Presumption is not faith, resistance to God is open defiance of His providence and will. "Woe unto him that striveth with his maker."

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER I.

Ver. 41. *We have sinned.* See how the works of darkness must needs come to light. God will have sinners to be their own detectors. The inward evidence of guilty conscience shall not suffice; their tongue shall tell it out, and, *ex ore tuo*, their own mouths shall sentence them. (*Dr. Richard Clerke.*) *Presumption.*—*We will go up.* For a creature to oppose is for briars and thorns to do battle against fire. Pharaoh never appeared nearer his object than when he met with destruction. —*Robinson.*

Ver. 43. *Rebelled.* Sin against God,

as He is *Almighty*, is the excess of madness and folly; but as He is most *kind and merciful*, it is the basest ingratitude. The greater His goodness, the greater is our guilt if we be undutiful servants, and the greater will be our punishment.—*Jortin.*

Ver. 46. *Abode many days.* All attempts to urge men forward, even in the right path, beyond the measure of their light, are impracticable, and unlawful if they were practicable; augment their light, conciliate their affections, and they will follow of their own accord.—*Robert Hall.*

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## CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL NOTES.—1. The story continued. After the unsuccessful attack, Israel broke up encampment at Kadesh. *Many days.* *i.e.*, many years in a nomadic life, wandering in various directions from place to place, according to pasture and water. Details are not mentioned, because not required.

2. This command relates to the journey from Kadesh to Mount Hor (Num. xx. 22; xxxiii. 37), and directs their march round the south extremity of Mount Seir, so as to "compass the land of Edom" (Jud. xi. 18; Num. xxi. 4), and so northwards towards the Arnon, *i.e.*, "by the way of the wilderness of Moab (ver. 8). This circuitous path was followed because of the refusal of the Edomites to allow the people to pass through their territory" (*Speak. Com.*).

4. *Afraid.* They repelled approach from western frontier; now they fear Israel coming round on the weak side (Ex. xv. 15).

5. *Meddle not, lit.*, excite not yourselves against them. They were not to war, nor injure them in property nor persons. Originally the relation between the two people was fraternal, and God had granted Mount Seir to Esau.

6. *Buy water, lit.*, dig water; perhaps purchased permission to dig wells for water.

7. *Blessed thee.* Israel had means to buy provisions, and should not therefore be guilty of fraud or violence.

8. Elath (tress.), *cf.* 1 Kings ix. 26, now called Akaba, on the route of annual pilgrimage from Cairo to Mecca. Ez-gaber, *cf.* Num. xxxiii. 35 (backbone of a man; so called, probably, from rugged rocks in its vicinity). A seaport near Elath, *cf.* 1 Kings ix. 26; 2 Chron. xx. 36.

9. Moabites and Ammonites (ver. 19) descended from Lot, and like Edomites, kinsmen of Israelites.

10-12. Ethnographical notices concerning earlier inhabitants of these lands. Emim, *i.e.*, frightful, terrible to the Moabites. Anakim, *cf.* Num. xiii. 32. Horims, Gen. xiv. 5.

13. Connected with ver. 9. Zered, the boundary line between Edom and Moab, crossed thirty-eight years after the doom pronounced upon them at Kadesh.

14. Sware, Num. xiv. 28, 29.

15. Destroy not by natural causes, but by terrors (Ex. xiv. 24) and judgments (Num. xvi. 35; xvii. 14).

16-19. Advance into the country of Moabites, but Israel not to meddle with them, for God would give them nothing of their land.

20-22. For confirmation, ethnographical notices introduced again. Zam, from *zamam*, to hum, a humming or roaring people; probably the *Zuzim* (Gen. xiv. 5).

23. Avims, the Avites (Josh. xiii. 3), possibly connected with Ava, 2 Kings xvii. 24 (*Speak. Com.*)

24. Command to possess the land of Sihon.

25. Be in anguish, *lit.*, writhe in pain (Is. xiii. 8).

26-29. Moses sent a peaceful messenger, to prove to the Amorites that they brought punishment upon themselves.

30. Hardened, *lit.*, sharpened his heart by keen resolution. No direct influence from God imparted. Sihon was permitted like Pharaoh to pursue his own course.

32-37. *cf.* Num. xxi. 28-26. "A war of extermination, in which all towns were laid under the ban (see Lev. xxvii. 29), *i.e.*, the whole of the population of men, women, and children, were put to death, and only the flocks and herds and material possessions were taken by the conquerors as prey."—*Keil*.

### TURNED BACK AND DELAYED.—Verses 1-3.

In this chapter Moses reviews the history of Israel, and narrates the journey from Kadesh to the frontier of the Amorites. He is silent about many things, but glances at God's goodness to the end of their wandering. Israel had been turned back, and entrance into Canaan delayed.

I. God's purpose is sometimes delayed in its fulfilment. God had purposed and promised that the land should be given to Israel, but they had come short of it. Their unbelief and rebellion had delayed the fulfilment of this design. Thus by our sins we may be driven away from our destiny, and hinder the work of God. "Ye shall know my *breach* (*lit.*, removal, withholding) of promise." (Num. xiv. 34.)

II. Human discipline is secured by this delay. We cannot always see what ends God has in view, but he brings good out of evil, and light from darkness. Two things we learn from this delay. 1. *Israel was prepared for the inheritance.* Men are often unfit for duty and destiny. Hasty preparation will be a curse and not a blessing. In the wilderness Israel was organised into a nation, received laws and learned obedience. Solitude, delay, and affliction are salutary, and discipline for life's end and reward. "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." 2. *The Canaanites had forfeited the inheritance.* Their opportunities were almost gone, and their day of grace over. They had ripened themselves for their doom. No overtures of peace were offered them. Their land was taken from them, and as an absolute sovereign gift bestowed upon Israel. Solemn thought, men may sin away their day of salvation. (Lev. xix. 42.)

**III. When men are prepared by discipline, God's purpose is realised through them.** God's design is not forgotten nor frustrated, though often delayed. If some do not, others are taught to accomplish it. David may not, but Solomon builds a house for God. God's purposes comprehend all agencies and all events. Change of method does not indicate change of design. "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him."

ISRAEL'S CHARGE CONCERNING ESAU AND MOAB.—*Verses 4-9.*

It appears from Num. xx. 18-20 that the Edomites were prepared to resist Israel's passage through their land. But the country was not invaded, and the Edomites did not attack nor hinder them in their journey. The Israelites are forbidden to meddle with these nations, for their lands were given them; to remember their blood relationship, and to deal kindly and justly with them. From this charge learn—

**I. Natural advantage is no ground for strife.** The Israelites were now strong in number and wealth. God was with them, and terror fell upon their enemies. "They shall be afraid of you." But they were not to take advantage of prevalent fear and weak opponents. The strong must help and not oppress the weak. Right and not might must rule. We are not to despise others because we are stronger than they in body and mind. Great nations should not invade and destroy small ones. Aggressive war may defeat its end, and ruin those who engage in it. "Scatter thou the people that delight in war."

**II. Natural brotherhood is a ground for social intercourse.** Israel, Edom, and Moab, were kinspeople. "Our brethren the children of Esau." All nations are made of one blood, bound by natural affinity, and mutually dependent. Trade, commerce, and international treaties, promote the good feeling and develop the resources of nations. Israel must not war, but trade. Their social intercourse must be straight-forward and honourable—not in jealousy, but in love—not as strangers, but as brethren. "Honour all men, love the brotherhood."

**III. God's gifts to others are no reason for dissatisfaction with our own.** "I will not give thee of their land," ver. 8, "because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession," ver. 4. God has apportioned to men and nations their position. They are to be grateful and content, and not to touch possessions which do not belong to them. Covet no man's houses or land, envy no person's influence and position. Be content with your own lot—it might have been worse—improve your own gifts. The desire of something unpossessed is a greater source of misery than positive pain or actual destitution. Solon asked by Croesus, "Who was the happiest man?" referred to a poor cottager of Greece, who never desired greater wealth or a better condition than he possessed.

**IV. God's goodness in the past is an encouragement for future blessings.** "The Lord thy God hath been with thee, thou hast lacked nothing." God had blessed Israel with abundance and they had no need to beg nor steal. His continued presence should prevent us from resorting to fraud or violence to supply our wants. We have God's all sufficient providence to depend upon, and should therefore live by faith and constant obedience. Our wants are known and our supplies are promised (*cf.* Deut. viii. 2, 3, 15, 16). Carking anxiety preys upon temper, spirits, and health; leads to envy, selfishness, and unbelief; and acts like the vulture feeding upon the vitals of Prometheus while chained to the rock. "Take no thought for the morrow."

## GOD'S CARE FOR HUMAN LIFE.—Verse 7.

*He knoweth* thy walking. God is omniscient and knows all things. But this knowledge is not mere notice, but intimate acquaintance with every step and circumstance of life; a fatherly care and regard for men. We learn therefore from this verse—

**I. Human life is under divine control.** This knowing comprehends purpose, presence, and providential guidance. 1. *In preventing wrong.* Israel were prevented from entering Canaan when determined to go in defiance of God's command. A rebellious self-will leads men to misery and destruction, but a merciful providence checks their folly. 2. *In disposing to right.* Israel's proud will was conquered, and they were led back into the wilderness. They were humbled and taught to obey and depend upon God. We are prevented from sin "and made willing" to serve in "the day of God's power."

**II. Human life is measured by Divine purpose.** The journey in the desert is a type of our life in the world. God fixed the time—"these forty years." So human life is measured in its length. It is not a matter of chance or inflexible law, but an object of Divine purpose. So many days, months, years, and no more. "The measure of my days." "Man's life," says Mt. Henry, "is no more governed by the stoic's blind fate, than by the Epicuræan's blind fortune." "His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee."

**III. Human life is an object of Divine care.** Whatever God makes He sustains. Human life, Christian life, is especially dear to Him. 1. *In our journeys.* "Thy walking." Temporally and spiritually the steps of a good man are ordered (formed, prepared) by the Lord (Ps. xxxvii. 23). God keeps an exact account, and notes every incident of our life. "Thou tellest (takest note of) my wanderings" (Ps. lvi. 8). 2. *In our works.* "In all the works of thy hand." Flocks and herds had increased (Num. xxxii. 1). Israel had gained wealth in trafficking with the tribes, and in cultivating the soil of the desert. There can be no prosperity or increase in labour without God's blessing. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich." 3. *In our wants.* "Thou hast lacked nothing." God had been their leader and protector, chosen places of rest and supplied their varied wants. Their clothes decayed not, and their shoes wore not away (Deut. xxix. 5). He knows our wants and wishes, temporal and spiritual, and can sustain us through life. "Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing." If God knows, measures and controls our pilgrimage on earth. 1. Learn dependence on Him. 2. Submit to Him. 3. Seek His guidance and presence.

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1-4. God the Leader of His people. Resting where they encamp, going with them in their journey, commanding and directing in their march and social intercourse.

Ver. 4. *Take ye good heed to yourselves.* Self-control needed. 1. *In prosperity.* Israel wonderfully blessed in strength and numbers, but must not become selfish and tyrannical. 2. *In*

*the presence of those who fear us.* When men are an easy prey to us we are ready to take advantage. But we must be cautious, and keep strict control over our spirit and actions.

Ver. 7. *God's continued mercies to us.* That we may see that God's care was not exclusively confined to Israel, we will show—I. What mercies have been vouchsafed to us during the



whole period of our sojourning in this wilderness. In relation to—1. Temporal concerns: the necessities and luxuries of life; 2. The concerns of the soul. II. Under what circumstances they have been continued to

us. If we look at Israel they will serve to show us. 1. How great our provocations towards God have been. 2. How entirely we have been under the influence of unbelief.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

### THE VICISSITUDES OF NATIONS.—*Verses 10–12; 20–23.*

The mention of the Moabites gives occasion for the interpolation of remarks concerns the earliest inhabitants of these countries. From what we read of these nations in this and other places, we trace the providence and purpose of God in history.

**I. God has made Nations to differ in their character and habits of life.** The names of these people are instructive. *The Enims* were considered by the Moabites to be terrible; men of gigantic stature and fierce manners. *The Horims* appear to be dwellers in caves, which abound in the Edomite range. Their origin is not known (*cf.* Gen. xiv. 6; xxxvi. 20). *The Zamzummins*, verse 20, a bullying presumptuous band of Rephaim; Gen. xiv. 5, were another giant tribe. *The Avim* dwelt in villages (farms) south-west of Canaan, and were a pastoral people. *The Captorims* sprang from *Caphtor* (Gen. x. 14), and were immigrants, like the Israelites. Thus some nations are physically strong and numerous, and others few and weak; some blessed with natural and others with spiritual advantages. The climate and products, the language and diversities of nations display the wisdom and goodness of God.

**II. God displaces some nations to fix others.** God permitted the children of Esau to drive out the Horims; Moab to subdue the Enims; and the Caphtorims to dislodge the Avims. Wars of conquests, changes of dynasties, and revolutions of history are under Divine control, and work out Divine purposes. The same law appears in the formation and government of the earth, and in the progress of Christianity. "This is so often repeated, to possess the minds of the Israelites with a sense of God's providence, which rules everywhere; displacing one people and settling another in their stead, and fixing their bounds also, which they shall not pass without leave" (*Patrick*). "He putteth down one, and setteth up another."

**III. God in the history of nations teaches many lessons.** If the providence of God is seen in the settlement of nations, it is not by chance or accident that they are what and where they are. Learn—1. *That all our possessions are the gifts of God.* Whatever be the skill and valour by which they were gained, in some mysterious manner they come from Him. The lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon are said to be given by God. Canaan was not acquired by the valour of Israel, but by the will of God. 2. *That all our possessions are uncertain in their tenure.* If nations can be deprived of their territories, kings of their thrones, and families of their inheritance: What hold have we of earthly fortunes? Why may we not be deprived of our place and power? Let us take heed lest we forfeit our blessings, lest God "take us away and pluck us out of our dwelling place."

"What exhibitions various hath the world  
Witness'd of mutability in all  
That we account most durable below!  
Change is the diet on which all subsist;  
Created changeable, and change at last  
Destroys them."—*Cowper*.

MEN OF WAR CONSUMED.—*Verses 14, 15.*

The outbreak at Kadesh at the false report of the spies was only the filling up of the measure of Israel's iniquity. That generation was not wholly given up to idolatry, but they had displayed a fearful amount of rebellion in the desert, only hinted at in this history, but truly described in other places. (Ezek. 20, 25, 26 ; Amos v. 25, 27 ; Acts vii. 42.) For this great wickedness "the men of war," those able to war, the responsible transgressors were doomed to perish in the desert by special judgments of God.

**I. The cause of this consumption.** By their long and open revolt, Israel had provoked the wrath of God. In his displeasure they were punished and buried in the wilderness. Wickedness of any kind is most unprofitable, often brings down the judgments of God and shortens human life. "With whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness?"

**II. The method of this consumption.** Their unbelief made this "a day of provocation in the wilderness" and their punishment was most exemplary.

1. It was a *terrible* consumption. "I will smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them." 2. It was a *complete* destruction. With two exceptions the whole generation were blotted out of existence. 3. This was *designedly* carried out. "When all the men of war were consumed and dead," then and not before were they permitted to invade the land and conquer its inhabitants. God can do without the greatest warriors. In his cause faith is more needful than numbers. This gives courage and make children heroes. God designs to give success, by removing the wise and the mighty and causing us to look to Him alone. "To whom sware he that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not."

ISRAEL'S CHARGE CONCERNING THE AMMONITES.—*Verses 16-19.*

After the death of the generation that had sinned the people were to cross the border of Moab and advance into Canaan. To the east of Moab was the country of the Ammonites, but Israel was not to touch them, for God had bestowed upon them possessions which must be held sacred. From this charge we learn—

**I. The honour God puts upon His word.** "I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession." God never breaks His word, nor changes His purpose. Ammon did not belong to the chosen people, but God guaranteed them certain temporal advantages. He is faithful in His dealings with them, and others must be taught to recognise this faithfulness. "I am the Lord ; I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass."

**II. The sacredness of human rights.** "The Most High divided to the nations their inheritance," and what is assigned to them by right belongs to them. It is our duty to respect national rights and national territories, and never wrong men by force or fraud. They may insult and seek to do us mischief, as Moab sought to ruin Israel (Num. xxii. 6), but we are not to retaliate, nor meddle with their possessions. "He that studieth revenge keepeth his wounds open."—*Bacon*.

**III. The blessings derived by children from their ancestors.** The Ammonites are called "the children of Lot," a righteous ancestor. We have power to be of service to our offspring, and put succeeding generations under obligation. "Children often fare the better in this world for the piety of their ancestors," says *Math. Henry*, "The seed of the upright, though they degenerate, yet are blessed with temporal good things."

THE FIRST WAR.—*Verses 24, 25.*

Israel ceased to meddle with some nations and thus practised self-denial and obedience. Now God gives them commission to begin the war, and promises them success over Sihon, king of Heshbon. If we wrong not others, God will ever right us.

**I. Israel must co-operate with God to attain the victory.** God purposed to give Sihon into their hands, but they must "contend with him in battle." God's promise does not exclude human effort. It should stimulate and encourage it. To secure the fulfilment of the pledge, we must "rise up" from idleness and doubt. God has promised to give us daily bread, a regular harvest, and spiritual conquest in His service; but we have to pray and fight.

**II. God will help and encourage Israel when they begin the contest.** No longer must they wait or hesitate. They must take the journey, pass over the river, begin the war. 1. *The enemy is dispirited.* They trembled in fear, were bereft of strength, and were ready to melt away before the victorious nation. "Their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" Jos. v. 1. 2. *God begins the work, and they have only to carry it on.* "Begin to possess it," for "this day will I begin." God's people must follow their Commander in courage and confidence. Fear, inactivity, and cowardliness may lose the day. Success often depends upon the vigour of the onset. "The first stroke is half the battle." This was seen at the battle of Cressy, in King Alfred's attack upon the Danes, and in Israel's conflict with Sihon. "Only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles."

THE DESTRUCTION OF SIHON.—*Verses 26-37.*

The kingdom of Sihon formed no part of the land promised to the seed of Abraham. Moses desired to pass through peaceably, and sent messengers to request this, but the king rejected the proposal, met Israel with hostility, and brought ruin upon his people and country.

**I. An example of human folly.** A respectful and pacific message was rejected (*cf.* Num. xxi. 21, 22). Israel was not permitted to pass through the "high way" quietly, and pay for what provisions they wanted, but Sihon made a bold and unprovoked attack, and was utterly defeated. What folly to be obstinate in wrong doing, to oppose might against right, and bring on self-destruction! How often are men found self-willed, casting off all restraint, forgetting their opportunities, and ripening themselves for judgment by abusing their mercies!

**II. An illustration of spiritual law.** "God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate." Not by evil influence, but by permitting him to carry out his own will, and to remain in circumstances fitted to soften rather than to harden. This effect results from a law which we see in operation every day in our moral nature. Sin blinds the mind, and alienates the affections. Indulgence in self-will corrupts and hardens the heart. When men resist the truth, and ward off appeals of conscience—when they are obstinate and invincible in sin—then a process of hardening goes on. They have less struggle, less compunction, and less feeling. And as the same sun melts one substance and hardens another, so the gospel subdues one heart and indirectly hardens another—becomes the savour of life to one and the savour of death to another. Pharaoh grew more stubborn, and rushed madly to his ruin. Ahab despised reproof until "the bow" received its commission. "He that being often



reproved (a man of reproof, *marg.*) hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

**III. An evidence of a retributive Providence.** This law is a mysterious operation of God in the moral government of the world. God hardened Sihon "that He might deliver him" up. The guilt of the Amorites was great, ready for judicial punishment. If they gained their territory by violence and bloodshed—if they forced their way into Gilead and Bashan, then they were repaid; for as they measured to others it was measured to them. But a natural course of sin against spiritual laws and unseen forces will bring retributive justice. In this world we have awful examples, predictions, and precursors of the judgment to come.

"Oh! blind to truth and God's whole scheme below,  
Who fancy bliss to vice, to virtue woe."—*Pope.*

#### THE VICTORY OF JAHAZ.—*Verses 32–35.*

Jahaz was a memorable place—a city of Moab, afterwards assigned to the tribe of Reuben and given to the priests (Jos. xiii. 18; 1 Chron. vi. 33; Is. xv. 4). Here Israel fought a battle and gained the victory.

**I. The victory was gained in self-defence.** Israel could only reach Canaan through the lands of Sihon. All reasonable demands had been rejected. They were hindered in seeking their natural rights, and provoked to war by a needless attack. A righteous cause gives courage, and inspires hope of victory in the conflict.

**II. The victory was secured by Divine help.** "The Lord our God delivered him before us." With God with us we shall always win, but without Him numbers and skill will not avail. In all spiritual conflicts victory belongs to Him, "for the battle is not your's, but God's."

**III. The victory was decisive in its results.** The battle had not to be fought again. Its advantages were not worthless. It was complete and overwhelming. The people were exterminated; "We smote him, and his sons, and all his people"—a warning to all who fight against God. The cities were "utterly destroyed" and the land desolated.

**IV. The victory was limited in its operations.** Only cattle and material goods were booty for the conquerors. The lands of the Ammonites were not touched. They left undone "whatsoever the Lord our God forbade us" to do. Ambition must be checked, and victors must learn self-control and dependence upon the Divine will. "Next to gaining a great victory is knowing how to use it," said Wellington.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 24. *Rise up.* Activity, diligence, progress and Divine direction in Christian pilgrimage. Neither be idle, nor remain stationary.

Vers. 24, 25. *I have given, rise up.* Attainment of Divine gifts. 1. They are ready to be given. 2. God will help us to get them. (a) By giving strength. "Contend with Him." (b) By disposing us to follow Him. "I begin"—"You begin."

Vers. 24, 25. *The fame of Israel as a conquering people.* I. How, at this time, that fame was increased, viz., by the conquest of the mightiest nations east of Jordan. II. The moral effects of this conquest. 1. Israel prepared for future conquest. 2. Canaan awed before she had received a blow.—*Biblical Museum.*

Ver. 30. *Made his heart obstinate.* Learn—1. God's power over men.



2. God's method of dealing with men as *moral governor and judge*. He suffers them to be hardened in consequence of obstinate wickedness, yet not as an arbitrary, capricious, or tyrannical being. He wills nothing but good, and therefore His will is the proper rule of judgment. But men obstinately pervert and resist His will. Hence learn—3. Man's fearful power in opposing God and destroying himself. "Who hath hardened himself against Him and hath prospered?"

Ver. 31. *Israel victorious*. We may apply thus to the spiritual Israel, the Christian Church. 1. We have a warfare. Contest with ignorance and sin, Satan and the world. 2. In this warfare God prepares the world for the conquests of the Church. By toning society, removing difficulties, and striking terror into the enemies. The world was never riper than at present for courageous, determined effort. "Great fear came on all them that heard those things." 3. In this warfare the Church can only conquer by God's presence. "Providence is with the strongest battalions," said Napoleon. But in this war neither might nor numbers will avail. "Not by might, nor by power." 4. The more victorious is

the Church the stronger is she for warfare. Victory gives experience, courage, and confidence in the commander. One success may be the forerunner of many. Israel's prowess flew on the winds, and widespread fear made further achievements easy. Good deeds reproduce themselves. The conquests of grace in the heart, and of the gospel in the world, inspire the Church with hope and enthusiasm. She becomes stronger, more ready to obey and fight, and appears "terrible as an army with banners."

Vers. 31-33. *Sihon's defeat*. 1. Self-inflicted. "He came out." 2. Unexpected. Just the reverse of anticipation. "I have them," cried Napoleon, concerning the English at Waterloo. What disappointment! 3. Very sudden. Only one pitched battle. 4. Divinely accomplished. "And the Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them."

Vers. 33 and 37. *The secret of successful undertaking*. 1. When directed by God. 2. When accompanied by God's help. 3. When made subservient to God's will.

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1. *Turned*. Thus God orders our will without infringing our liberty. We observe this supremacy, in *directing* not only an important end, but every step towards it. Often has the way of our own devising been blocked up and an opposite way marked out, with the ultimate acknowledgement.—"He led me forth in the right way.—*Bridge*."

Ver. 3. *Long enough*. Delays, whether in the business of God or our own, are hateful and prejudicial; many lose the land of promise by lingering.—*Nicholls*.

Ver. 4, 5. *Meddle not*. How many

unholy hearts would be restrained by the practice of these rules of wisdom and love! A generous self-forgetting warmth of kindness puts down the first evil; denying ourselves the pleasure of justifying our cause, or triumphing over our opponent; instead of standing upon punctilious reforms, or waiting for an acknowledgement from the offender.—*Bridge*.

Ver. 6. *Water*. The value attached to water in the East is here brought strikingly before us; also the justice which characterised the policy of the Jewish law giver. The Edomites were in possession of the wells, and the fluid

of life must be paid for, if money would be accepted.—*Temperance Commentary.*

Ver. 7. *Knoweth.* Have you not much reason for thankfulness in your retrospect? And when things you undertook have not prospered in your sense of prosperity, have you not found that in some way you never expected they did you good? Have you not often been thankful that you did not succeed where your heart was calculating on unbounded success? Where your work has not enriched you, has it not often humbled you? and are you not constrained to say now, after an impartial retrospect of thirty, forty or sixty years, that “the Lord hath blessed me in all the works of my hands.”—*Dr. Cumming.*

Vers. 10–12; 20–23. *National changes.* The succession of tribes or nations indicated in the chapter is a very remarkable feature; showing that not only individuals pass away like a shadow, but nations also. There is not a nation at this moment inhabited by the people that dwelt in it fifteen, or sixteen hundred years ago. The people in Rome are less like the ancient Romans than we are; the inhabitants of Athens are not the lineal descendants of the ancient Greeks. And who knows not that our own country has successively been invaded by Saxon, Norman, and Dane; and that Britain which we look upon as our home has been successively peopled by different

nations. As if God would teach the nations of the earth, as well as the units that compose them, that here we have no continuing city, no fixed place of abode; that we are nationally and individually pilgrims and strangers and should be looking for a better country.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Ver. 14. 16. *Wasted.*

Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,  
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground:

Another race the following spring supplies;  
They fall successive, and successive rise.

—*Pope's Homer.*

Ver. 24, 25. *Fear of thee.* As in the natural world in times of ripeness there is change in the appearance of things; so there are evident signs of ripeness in the spiritual world. There is a preparedness with individuals, neighbourhoods, and nations. Let the Church awake and work, and her victories will be large and immediate.

Ver. 33–37. *God delivered.* The person who has a firm trust in the Supreme Being, is powerful in his power, wise by his wisdom, happy by his happiness. He reaps the benefit of every Divine attribute, and loses his own insufficiency in the fulness of Infinite Perfection.—*Addison.*

Give me the eye which can see God in all, and the hand which can serve Him with all, and the heart which can bless him for all.—*Abp. Secker.*

### CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL NOTES.—*Conquest of Og.* Israel were able to advance to the Jordan after the defeat of Sihon and the conquest of his land. But Og, the Amonitish King, still kept the northern half of Gilead and all Bashan, a rugged mountainous country, valuable for rich and luxuriant pastures.

1. Came out. Without provocation, disliking the presence of the Israelites, or seeking to revenge the overthrow of his friends and allies, Og rushed to attack.

2. Cf. Num. xxi. 31, etc.

4. Argob (stony). A region including the sixty towns which formed the kingdom of Og in Bashan, i.e., all the towns of the land of Bashan, viz. (according to ver. 5) all the fortified towns

besides the unfortified and open country towns of Bashan. (*cf. Porter's "Giant Cities of Bashan,"* and "Historico-Geographical sketch of Bashan;" Camb. Essays, Art, "Ancient Bashan and the Cities of Og," by *Cyril Graham and Speak. Com.* in loco).

8-11. Moses takes a retrospective view of the whole of the land taken on the other side of the Jordan; first of all (ver. 9) in its whole extent from the Arnon to Hermon, then (ver. 10) in its separate parts, to bring out in all its grandeur what the Lord had done for Israel. The notices of the different names of Hermon (ver. 9), and of the bed of king Og (ver. 11), are also subservient to this end.—*Keil*.

11. Giant's Rephaim (Gen. xiv. 5; xv. 20) bedstead of iron for strength, durability, and a prevention against insects which infest wood in warm climates. The ordinary cubit was eighteen inches. Now a bed is always larger than the man who sleeps in it. Probably Og had his bed made so large, partly for ostentation, partly "as a memorial of his superhuman greatness, on the occasion of some expedition of his against the Ammonites; and this bed may have been preserved in their capital as a proof of the greatness of their foe."—*Keil*.

Vers. 12-20. A review of the conquered land. "The land taken from the two kings was given by Moses to the two tribes and a half for a possession. The southern portion from Aroer in the Arnon valley (*cf. Num. xxxii. 34*), and half Gilead (as far as the Jablak, ver. 10) with its towns (which are enumerated, Josh. xiii. 15-20 and 24-28) to the Reubenites and Gadites; and the northern half of Gilead, with the whole of Bashan (*i.e.* all the region of Argob, ver. 4, and Num. xxxii. 33.) to the half tribe of Manasseh."—*Keil*.

15. *Cf. Num. xxxii., xxxix., xl.; 1 Chron. ii. 22.*

16-17. The possession of Reuben and Gad is more exactly described according to its boundaries.

18-20. The two tribes and a half are reminded of the condition on which their possessions were given to them (*cf. Num. xxxii. 20-32*). Meet for war, *lit.*, sons of power or might; not all men of war, or of age to war; but man specially powerful and fit for the enterprise.

22. He emphatic, if God Himself would fight, no need for fear.

25. Goodly mountain, the whole range of the mountains of Canaan, culminating in distant Lebanon—goodly, when contrasted with the arid desert. Moses longed to enter the land; naturally thought the Divine threatening was conditional and reversible, but his request not granted.

26. Wroth. Addressing the people, Moses mentions the punishment of their leaders as a most impressive warning to them (*Speak. Com.*). Their conduct was the occasion of his sin. Suffice, *lit.*, enough for thee, be satisfied with what I have given and done for thee.

27. Pisgah, the northern portion of the mountains of Abarim. Top of Pisgah, *i.e.*, Mount Nebo (chap. xxiv. 1).

28. *Cf. chap. i. 33; iii. 21; xxxi. 7; Num. xxvii. 23.* A precise indication of the locality in which the address was given to Israel.

## DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT.—Verses 1, 2.

Before crossing Jordan, Israel turned and went northwards, "up the way to Bashan." Og, a mighty king, ruled in that country. God purposed to give the Israelites all his lands, but they, perhaps, hesitated, or were afraid; hence the injunction, "Fear him not."

I. The need of encouragement. In ordinary conflicts we have need of heart and courage. But special circumstances demand special help. 1. *They were surrounded with dangers.* In a rocky country (Argob), well suited to harass and entangle the invaders. With a powerful and warlike foe in front, well posted and defended in impregnable fortresses, they might well fear. Man, sinful man, is timid in spiritual conflict, and fear often leads to flight. 2. *They were about to engage with a giant race.* Og, the redoubtable leader, was the remnant of the Rephaim (Gen. xiv. 5, xv. 20). The people were numerous and courageous. They "came out against us." But giants are only pigmies before God.

II. The ground of encouragement. There is always reason for doing what God commands. 1. *The Promise of God.* "I will deliver him." God's promise is connected with His purpose, and what He has purposed He will do for us. Hence



fear not, trust and obey. 2. *Their own past experience.* "Thou shalt do unto him as thou did'st unto Sihon." One conquest gives joy and help for another. Every evil course forsaken, and every sinful habit subdued by God's grace, give consciousness of God's presence and qualify us for other contests. In our moral warfare let us have courage to do right, to resist temptation, and to serve God. To be undetermined when the work is so urgent, and the command to do it so authoritative, is disobedience and death.

### THE CONQUEST OF OG.—*Verses 1-7.*

"The last of his race in this region, he was still the ruler of his country ; and the whole Amorite inhabitants from Hermon to the Jabbok, and from the Jordan to the desert, acknowledged the supremacy of this giant warrior. Og resolved to defend his country. It was a splendid inheritance, and he would not resign it without a struggle. Collecting his forces he marshalled them on the broad plain before Edrei. We have no details of the battle ; but doubtless the Amorites and their leader fought bravely for country and for life. It was in vain ; a stronger than human arm warred for Israel. Og's army was defeated, and he himself was slain."—*Porter.* Learn—

**I. The power of right over might.** God had given the land to Israel, and they were fighting for their possessions. Og was a mighty king. His people confided in his strength and their own prowess. They believed in worldly power, in physical force. In modern as well as in rude ages might is exalted and trusted. But "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." "The fortunes of war" change, and one incautious step may end in ruin. Truth and right, God and His cause are mightiest and will prevail.

**II. The impotence of hostile preparations against God.** Og was confident in his attack. His cities were impregnable, and it was impossible for Israel to overcome them or escape. But how impotent to defend themselves. The sixty cities, walled to heaven and stoutly defended, were levelled to the dust. The rout was most wonderful and complete. So will it be with all power and hostility against the cause of God. "Voltaire boasted that it took twelve men to set up Christianity, but he would show that one man was sufficient to overthrow it," says a writer. The giant power of this world may assault. Paganism, infidelity, and modern science may oppose, but God will defend His people and advance His kingdom.

**III. The mysterious providence of God on behalf of His people.** "Humanly speaking, Israel could never have conquered Og had he remained in the cities. They could not have invested the country, or endured long sieges. It would require no small amount of skill to entice these people from behind walls ; and it is more improbable that such a people should, of their own free will, risk a battle in the open plain. There must have been some almost miraculous interference in favour of the Israelites. And from a casual notice in another place (Josh. xxiv. 12), we find that God sent a special scourge among these Rephaim in the shape of swarms of hornets, which we may suppose harassed them so much in their stone houses that they were driven out of their towns, and preferred the alternative of meeting the Israelites to perishing from the stings of these creatures."—(*Cyril Graham.*) Thus by strange providences God helps His people.



THE CONQUEST OF TWO KINGS.—*Verses 8-12.*

Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, king of Bashan, were two famous kings; conspicuous for bravery, high, and distinguished from all others, such was the dread they inspired that God gave Israel special encouragement in attacking them. These giants were conquered. "We utterly destroyed them."

**I. Conquest of enemies strong and numerous.** These giants were strong in themselves, and in their cities and armies. They were strong in their feeling of security, and in their hope of victory. God never destroys His enemies in their weakness, but in their might, that the glory may be to His name. "I will break the chief (choice or highest) of their strength." (Jer. xlix. 35.)

**II. Conquest to give place to others.** Nations have their time, pass away, and give way to others. They are great one day and conquered the next. Their glory departs, and their inheritance is bestowed upon successors. Power, fame, and wealth are transferred from one to another; populations are destroyed and lands possessed to fulfil the purpose of God. Spiritually giant evils are overcome, and "rulers of the darkness of this world" are dislodged to secure and advance the interests of His people. In this we may learn—1. *God's hatred to sin.* 2. *God's severity against evil doers.* 3. *God's kindness to His people.*

**III. Conquest most memorable.** "This signal victory and its circumstances evidently impressed the people deeply at this time, and its memory, as the Psalms attest, lingered for ages after in the national mind." (*Speak Com.*) Proverbs and inspired songs (*cf.* Num. xxi. 27-30; Ps. cxxxv. 11, 12, cxxxvi. 19-21) commemorated the triumphs of Israel.

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *Came out.* 1. *The boldness and self-confidence of the enemy.* Men often infatuated by those very measures which they think are most wisely adopted. 2. *The readiness of God to help.* (a) In timidity. "Fear not." (b) In danger. "I will deliver." (c) In contest. "Thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon."

Vers. 1-7. *A famous victory.* I. *Victory promised before the battle.* An evidence of God's condescension and an encouragement to Israel. II. *Victory gained by the strength of past experience.* The conquest of Sihon

prepared for the conquest of Og. The joy of victory spurs to further contest, and begets courageous faith. III. *Victory most complete.* 1. The cities destroyed. 2. The people exterminated. 3. The cattle taken; and 4. The land possessed and parcelled out to others.

Ver. 11. *King Og's bedstead.* 1. *A monument of human folly.* Trying to frighten by size. 2. *A trophy of conquest.* It might be seized as a prize, purchased from Israelites as a curiosity, or Og, being wounded, might have fled to Rabbath, and died on his own bedstead.

REVIEW OF CONQUERED TERRITORIES.—*Verses 12-21.*

After the conquest of Sihon and Og, the remaining countries on the east side of Jordan were brought into subjection by the energy of Jair. This chief, according to the pastoral habits of his people, called the "Bashan villages"

(Num. xxxii. 41) by a name after his own, Bashan-havoth-jair. These conquered territories are reviewed in their extent and in their separate parts.

**I. The method in which they were conquered.** Whatever reason led the Israelites northwards, it was a matter of necessity as well as policy to secure a base of operations. 1. *The lands were given by God, but acquired by human effort.* God promised the land, but they had to fight and possess it. God's purposes never interfere with our use of means, and the only way to secure possessions is to co-operate with Him. 2. *The lands were finally subdued by chosen men.* Jair occupied the pastoral parts, and Nobah (*cf.* Num. xxxii. 42), of the family of Machir, took Kenath, the capital, and gave his name to it. Pioneers have been found in all departments. In all warfare and enterprise a few heroic men have set examples, and stimulated others to follow them. They live among us in the records of history, and in the deeds of their lives. They bequeath to posterity a name to study, admire, and imitate.

**II. The reasons for which they were held.** Each tribe had its own conquests secured to them, and the boundaries so arranged as to prevent dispute. But wives and little ones were to be left in captured cities. Men of war were to go forward and drive out all the enemies before them, and then "return and be guiltless before the Lord" (*cf.* Num. xxxii, 20-23. The land was held on condition that they helped others. They fought for homes and inheritance for their brethren. Our wealth, position, and influence, are not given for selfish purposes, but to interest and help our fellow-men. We should be disinterested, for we can never be exempted in any service. This is the secret of personal enjoyment and successful work for Christ. "Then ye shall return unto the land of your possession and enjoy it." Josh. i. 13-15.

#### JOSHUA NOMINATED.—Verses 21, 22.

This reminiscence recalls God's goodness in the appointment of Joshua (Num. xxvii. 12) which took place "*at that time*," that is, after the conquest of the land on the east of Jordan. Joshua was honoured and qualified to succeed Moses, in an eminent degree, through the special service of the high priest, and the endowments of the Spirit of God. Yet the people needed encouragement in such a leader as Joshua, "Fear not," etc. In these words, notice—

**I. Past experience reminds of God's goodness.** "Thine eyes have seen," etc. The testimony of sense and experience should be convincing enough. God's goodness is not a mere declaration or display, but a matter of feeling and enjoyment. "O *taste* and see that the Lord is good."

**II. Past success a pledge of future help.** "So shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest." What God had done to Sihon and Og, He could do unto all mighty men. His hand is never tired, never shortened, that it cannot save. What He begins for His people He will finish, and the victories of the past typify the future conquests of the gospel.

**III. Present help should prompt to future courage.** "The Lord your God shall fight for you," therefore "fear not them." When God is with us, our cause must be victorious. We reproach our leader, dishearten our comrades, and weaken ourselves, when we follow in fear and trembling. "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men," that ye be not servants unto (your enemies). (1 Sam. iv. 9.)

"Our doubts are traitors ;  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt it."—*Shakespeare.*

THE PRAYER OF MOSES.—*Verses 23-28.*

Moses knew that he would not be permitted to enter Canaan, yet he desired to cross the Jordan and see the land. His request was not granted. In the answer we “behold the goodness and severity of God”—severity in the punishment of his sin and goodness in its mitigation.

**I. The request of Moses.** The entreaty is most fervent and affecting, containing an appeal to God’s greatness and power by which he was distinguished from heathen deities and known to his people. 1. *To enjoy further manifestations of Divine goodness.* “Thou hast begun to show.” The past was only a beginning, a foretaste. The more we see of Divine power and taste of Divine love, the more we desire to see. 2. *To enter the land.* “Let me go over and see the good land.” For this object had he lived, and when about to be realised he was disappointed. How often do we come near to success and never gain it! The hopes of a lifetime may be frustrated when apparently about to be realised. 3. *To finish his work.* It was natural for Moses to wish to retain the leadership to the end instead of resigning it into other hands. He had brought the people out of Egypt, why not lead them into Canaan and settle them in it? It is possible through sin to leave our work undone, or be made to resign it to others. But we must seek the honour of God, not our own, and be ready to encourage others whom God puts in our place.

**II. The answer of God to this request.** The prayer of Moses was not answered. God, in His infinite wisdom, refused, and besought him to urge the request no further. It was good for Israel, and good for Moses himself to be denied. “God,” says Cecil, “denies a Christian nothing, but with a design to give him something better.” 1. *God demands submission to His will.* “Let it suffice thee.” Be satisfied with past favours and present arrangements, and submit. Grace given, will be grace all sufficient. When we know God’s will, we must acquiesce at once without murmuring and disputing. “I besought the Lord thrice; and He said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee.” 2. *God refused entrance, but permits him to see the land.* “Lift up thine eyes.” This view has been memorable in history, impressed our theology, and become a proverb in Christian life. Perhaps Moses was specially prepared for this vision, for “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” Prayer is not always unsuccessful. God may refuse one thing and bestow another. 3. *God assures him that his work shall be finished by the appointment of a successor.* “Charge Joshua, for he shall go over before this people.” Workmen may be taken away, but the work shall go on. Moses may bring out of Egypt—Joshua must lead into Canaan. God finds the men; we are to train and charge them, to finish what we begin. Earnest workers, youthful vigour, shall never be wanting in the Christian Church. Hence, let us take encouragement, and fear to sin, lest we die before our special work is done. If Moses was excluded from Canaan, how can the sinner enter heaven? “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes.”

WISHING TO GO OVER JORDAN.—*Verse 25.*

This desire seemed *improper*. For God had expressly said unto Moses and Aaron, “Ye shall not bring this congregation into the land.” Did Moses, then, through infirmity, think that God was changeable? No, but he thought whether the threatening was absolute, especially as it was not ratified by oath,



as the exclusion of the people was. For many of God's denunciations, in the sentence against Nineveh, for instance, have a condition implied, though not expressed, *i.e.*, they will be executed *unless* repentance intervene; upon this principle it was possible for Moses to hope for retraction of the interdict. But the desire was a *natural one*. Natural to wish to enter Canaan as an object of curiosity, of which he had heard so much; still more as an object of hope, which had been promised so long with every enhancement. This animated the people to leave Egypt, and encouraged them in the desert. This was the end, the recompense of their toils for forty years, and now they had nearly reached it. How painful to miss the prize when the hand was seizing it—to have the cup dashed even from the lip! Yet the desire was *refused*. God sometimes refuses the desires of His servants, even the most eminent. He does this in two ways. Sometimes He does it in *love*. What is desired might prove dangerous and injurious. We should think badly of a father who gave a stone for bread, or a scorpion for a fish. But if the son were to ask for a scorpion instead of a fish, or cry for a sharp instrument, *then* would he not hate his child unless he rejected his wish? In many cases must a wise and good parent distinguish between wishes and wants! A child may wish for liberty, and want restraint; for a holiday, and want schooling; for dainties, and want medicine. Here the parent must act, not according to the wish, but the welfare of the child. How much better for the Jews had God turned a deaf ear to their importunity? Who knows what is good for a man in this life? No one but God—the *good* God. He sometimes refuses in *anger*. Wrath is incompatible with love; but anger is not: anger may even flow from it. Though Christians cannot be condemned, they may be chastened: and the law of the house is, that if the children obey not, He will visit with the rod. Hence those saved eternally may fall under present rebuke, and be refused many things on which they set their heart. By such conduct Providence teaches submission to His people, and the evil of sin to others. Yet His desire was *partially indulged*. The command to get on the top of Pisgah was not to tantalize him, but to be a *mitigation* of the severe sentence. The preservation of his sight fitted him for the gaze—the prospect showed him how worthy the country was of all that had been said about it; and would give him high views of the truth and goodness of God in His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. With this also was the influence of Divine grace which satisfied him and made him content with his condition. While his mind also raised to things above, in type and emblem, to a better country, into which he was immediately to enter—and there would be no want of Canaan. Thus in judgment God remembers mercy, and though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion. “Like as a father pitieth his children,” etc. (Condensed from *Jay*.)

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 18–20. *Your brethren*. Armed before them to help them in warfare. 1. One party should not retire from active service or conflict until the rights of others are gained. 2. The welfare of one part of the community should be the concern of all. 3. There should be no schism nor separation in the body. This might easily have taken place with a geographical division so complete.

Vers. 21 and 28. *Appointment of Joshua*. 1. God's care for His people. 2. God's provision made for them—(a) In selecting suitable persons. (b) Securing them sympathy and co-operation. (c) In promising all needful help.

Ver. 28. 1. The duties of Joshua (a) to lead into Canaan, “go over,” etc.; (b) divide the land and settle



the tribes. "He shall cause them to inherit the land." 2. The requirements of Joshua—(a) charge, (b) encourage, and (c) strengthen him.

Ver. 25. *Good land.* Canaan pro-

mised—fruitful—the chosen home of God's people and a type of heaven.

"All o'er those wide extended plains  
Shines one eternal day;  
There God, the Sun, for ever reigns,  
And scatters night away."—*Stennett.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1-3. *Og came out.* Man proposes but God disposes. How many plans are rendered abortive by death. On the tomb of Mohammed II is the inscription, "I proposed to myself the conquest of Rhodes and proud Italy." Og thought to destroy Israel. How different the result!

Ver. 4-10. *These cities.* The conquest of Bashan, began under the leadership of Moses in person, was completed by Jair, one of the most distinguished chiefs of the tribe of Manasseh. In narrating his achievements, the sacred historian brings out another remarkable fact connected with this kingdom of Bashan. In Argob, one of its little provinces, Jair took no less than *sixty great cities*, "fenced with high walls, gates and bars; besides unwall'd towns a great many." Such a statement seems all but incredible. It would not stand the arithmetic of Bishop Colenso for a moment. Often, when reading the passage, I used to think that some strange statistical mystery hung over it; for how could a province measuring not more than thirty miles by twenty support such a number of fortified cities, especially when the greater part of it was a wilderness of rocks? But mysterious, incredible as this seemed, on the spot with my own eyes, *I have seen* that it is literally true. The cities are there to this day. Some of them retain the ancient names recorded in the Bible. Porter's *Giant Cities of Bashan*.

Ver. 11. *Og.* King of the district which under the name of Bashan, extended from the Jabbok up to the base of Hermon. There is no direct notice as in the case of Sihon, of his

having invaded the country, and this omission, combined with the mention of his gigantic stature, warrants the conjecture that he was one of the leaders of the aboriginal race, for which Bashan had always been renowned.—*Stanley.*

Ver. 18-20. Patriotism. *Rest unto your brethren.* He who loathes war and will do everything in his power to avert it, but who will in the last extremity, encounter its perils, from love of country and of home—who is willing to sacrifice himself and all that is dear to him in life, to promote the well-being of his fellow-man, will ever receive a worthy homage.—*Abbott.*

Ver. 21-28. Never in the history of the chosen people, could there have been such a blank as that when they became conscious that "Moses, the servant of the Lord was dead." He who had been their leader, their law-giver, their oracle, as far back as their memory could reach, was taken from them at the very moment when they seemed most to need him. It was to fill up this blank that Joshua was called. The narrative labours to impress upon us the sense that the continuity of the nation and of its high purpose was not broken by the change of person and situation. "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee" (Josh. i. 5). There was indeed, as yet, no hereditary or fixed succession. But the germ of that succession is better represented by the very contrast between Moses and Joshua than in any other passage in the sacred history.—*Stanley.*

Ver. 25. *Let me go over.* We wish to live; who can blame us? Life is

sweet ; but if our Maker have ordained that nothing but death can render us glorious, what madness is it to stick at the condition ! Oh, our gross infidelity, if we do not believe that Great

Arbitrer of the world infinitely wise to know what is best for us ; infinitely merciful, to will what He knows best ; infinitely powerful, to do what He will ! —*Bp. Hall.*

## CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—From the mention of what God had done for Israel, Moses passes to the obedience of the law. They were under deep obligation to keep it, and in doing so, consisted their wisdom, greatness, and destiny.

1. **Statutes**—rules concerning religion and Divine worship. **Judgments**—civil enactments, public and private. The two denote the whole law in its leading features (Lev. xix, 37).

2. This law must not be altered ; but kept as God's unchangeable word.

Vers. 3, 4. The results of obedience or disobedience had just been seen at Baal-Peor (Num. xxv., 3, 9 ; idolators were destroyed, faithful men remained alive. **Followed**—a common expression for religious walk and life, cf. Jer. viii. 2 ; ix. 14. **Cleave**—hold fast to one ; intimate communion and attachment.

Vers. 5, 6. Observance would be their life, enjoyment, and influence upon other nations. Their wisdom would attract as in the case of the Queen of Sheba, the enquiring earnest heathens.

Vers. 7, 8. This attractive force consisted in possessing superior privileges and serving God. "True right has its roots in God, and with the obscurity of the knowledge of God, law, and right, with their divinely established foundations, are also shaken and obscured." cf. Rom. i. 26-32).—*Kcil.*

9. **Heed.** Forget not what has been seen. **Keep thy soul**, i.e., defend thy life from danger or injury (Prov. xiii. 3 ; xix. 16).

10. The day, the delivery of the law, an era most memorable and never to be forgotten. The leading facts are given.

11. **Burned unto the midst**, *lit.*, "to the heart of heaven, i.e., quite into the sky, a rhetorical description of the awful majesty of the pillar of fire, in which the glory of the Lord appeared upon Sinai" (*Kcil.*). Moses seeks to renew the impressions then produced.

12. **Voice**, utterance of words, but no shape or form was seen.

15. Since no figure of God was seen, beware of making one and acting corruptly.

16. **Graven**, carved or sculptured in wood, metal, or stone. **Similitude**, form, idol (2 Chron. xxxiii. 7, 15). **Likeness**, pattern, model (Ex. xxv. 9, 40).

17, 18. **Beast.** A warning against animal worship of Egypt, of which they had seen so much.

19. Worship of heavenly bodies was not to beguile them. **Driven**, constrained or urged (cf. xiii. 13). **Divided**, not allotted the heathen, or permitted them to worship ; but "whose light God has distributed to the nations for their use and benefit, and which therefore, being creatures ministering to man's conscience, must not be worshipped as man's lords."—*Speak. Com.*

20. **Iron furnace**, an image of the bondage and intense affliction in Egypt.

Vers. 21-24. Moses again refers to his exclusion from Canaan, and renews the warning not to forget the Covenant, or make graven images. God is a jealous God, and *consuming fire*, applied with special reference to manifestations in His glory (Ex. xxiv. 17).

Vers. 25-28. Warnings against idolatry enforced by distinct predictions of punishment. Future generations who had not known what they knew would utterly perish. **Prolong**, (26), to have long life ; here to occupy the land long severed from God they would lose their inheritance. They would be scattered, become *few* in number compared with those around them (27), and be compelled to serve idols which could neither see nor smell (28).

29. **Seek.** Israel would then be sensible of sin, would seek and find God (Luke xv. 17).

30. These threatenings and sufferings. **Latter**, *lit.*, at the end of the days ; the end of captivity, or far distant future.

31. **Not forsake**, *lit.*, not withdraw his hand (Jos. x. 6) or let loose ; nor cast off (Rom. xi. 1)

Vers. 32-40. To secure obedience, Moses again reminds them of their choice, instruction, deliverance, and guidance.

32. For a reason given, because merciful, Jehovah delivered them. Days past, from earliest times, from the records of all places we read not of such an event.

34. A reference to miracles of deliverance. Assayed, attempted. Temptations, testings, trials, to Pharaoh especially. Signs and wonders, plagues of Egypt (Exod. vii. 3), extraordinary events with a moral design. War, conflict at Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 14; xv. 3.) Terrors, effects on Egyptians, cf. Ps. cv. 27, 38; cvi. 21.

36. Supernatural revelations and method in which they were given emphasized. Instruct, tame, or, bind a bullock (Jer. xxxi. 18), then to discipline; generally to chastise, correct, instruct (Prov. ix. 7).

Vers. 37. All this from love to their fathers. Seed. Abraham's sight, *lit.*, by his face, his presence with them. "My presence (*lit.*, my face) shall go with thee" Exod. xxxiii. 14).

Vers. 41-43. Many regard these verses as an interpolation. "There is, however, no reason to depart from the view suggested alike by their contents and context. The vv. preceding are clearly the conclusion, as those succeeding are the exordium, of a distinct and complete discourse. These vv. then are inserted between the two simply for the reason to which they themselves call attention ("Then Moses severed three cities, etc."), *i.e.*, the fact narrated took place historically after Moses spoke the one discourse and before he delivered the other. In thus severing the three cities of refuge, Moses carried out a previous command of God (Num. xxxv. 14), and so followed up his exhortations to obedience, by setting a punctual example of it as far as opportunity was given him." (*Speak. Com.*)

44. This the law, a preface to the following rehearsal and explanations of the law—"including in fact the central part and substance of the book, which now follows in twenty-two chapters"—with a notice of time and place.

#### HEARING AND OBSERVING THE LAW.—Verses 1-4.

Moses now proceeds to urge practical obedience. The events in their recent history were motives and encouragements to keep the law. These events were related to quicken attention, remind them of their duty, and the benefits of performing it. "Now therefore hearken," etc.

I. The law in its nature. "The statutes and judgments" represent the law in its leading features. 1. *It is Divine in its authority.* "The commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." The voice of God is heard in the words. A revelation of God's will is needful. Man may discover natural laws and reach perfection in science, but God alone can reveal moral duty and teach us to perform it. "Which I teach you." 2. *It is unchangeable in its demands.* It is law, that which is laid down as a permanent rule of life. Human systems are set up and pulled down, altered and violated, but God's commandments remain the same for all ages and for all nations, firm as the everlasting hills, right as the mind of God, and perfect in their requirements. "Ye shall not add unto, nor diminish." 3. *It is adapted to man's moral condition.* In perplexity and restlessness these statutes bind in their authority and purpose. These judgments teach what is right—what is due to God and our fellow-men. In all circumstances, in all relationships, we have a Divine unerring rule of life.

II. The law in its design. "Hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes for to do them, that ye may live." 1. *To give life.* "That ye may live." Life and prosperity depended upon their obedience. Not merely natural life in its measure and enjoyment (chap. v. 33; vi. 2), but spiritual life, that higher life "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." When our conduct accords with the law of God, we find "the highest good, on the largest scale, for the longest period." But life spiritual and eternal are not secured by the law which we have broken. Jesus Christ only gives life and salvation. 2. *To confirm the inheritance.* Obedience was the condition of possessing and continually enjoying the inheritance. Not in numbers and valour, not in the



wisdom of their priests nor the wealth of their princes, but in observing the law of God did their security and prosperity consist. "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers."

**III. The law in its observance.** To give life and secure their possessions the law must be observed in its completeness. "Ye shall not add unto the word, neither shall ye diminish ought." We add by superstition and tradition, we diminish by ritual and creed at our peril. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar." God's law is perfect, and must be kept in its entirety. "Nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Ecc. iii. 14).

**IV. The law enforced by examples.** In their history they had experience of the danger of disobedience and the blessings of obedience. Baal-peor witnessed to the truth and authority of the law and ought to be a warning against apostasy. 1. *Idolators were destroyed.* "All the men who followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed" (cf. Numb. xxv. 3-9). 2. *Faithful followers were preserved alive.* "Ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive, every one of you this day." Thus Divine law is attested by human experience and history. "Your eyes have seen" these things. Take warning and do not provoke God to anger.

#### NATIONAL PRE-EMINENCE.—Verses 5-8.

Israel's relation to God and possession of his laws exalted them above other nations. Loyalty to God would not only give them life, but reputation for wisdom and understanding. Only through God's teaching and blessing had they become a great nation. If they lost a sense of duty and dependence upon Him they would lose their pre-eminence. "Keep, therefore, and do them." We learn how national pre-eminence is attained—

**I. A nation is pre-eminent by enlightening the people through the word of God.** Unto Israel were committed "the oracles of God" and this gave them advantage (Rom. iii. 1, 2). Their national glory and attraction rested on obedience to the "statutes and judgments" which they possessed. If they meditated upon these, practised and taught these, they would be wise, retain their greatness, and exercise moral influence upon surrounding nations. The possession of the Bible and the means of grace; the erection of schools and religious institutions, will not make a nation great. Just laws, true science, and noble institutions to speed them are a great responsibility and privilege. But in reverence for God and His word, in the earnest endeavour to practice its commands, in domestic, social, and political life will be our eminence and prosperity. "For this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations."

**II. A nation is pre-eminent by valuing and improving its religious privileges.** "What nation so great, who hath God so nigh unto them" (ver. 7). Moses reminds them of their privileges. But present greatness must not lead them to forget God and their duty. Future prosperity depends upon right use of what they now enjoy. God's nearness should prompt them to worship and obedience. God's righteous judgments should be the ground of their stability and the secret of success. If England disregards the Sabbath, neglects her duty and improves not her religious advantages, no science or legislation can preserve her superiority. Her glory will decay, and it may be more tolerable for rude nations, for Sodom and Gomorrah, at the day of judgment than for her.



III. A nation is pre-eminent by cherishing a spirit of obedience to God, from whom religious privileges come. We must not trust to the splendour of our fleet and the valour of our soldiers, nor to the extent of our commerce and the greatness of our empire. Infidelity denies God, and false science ignores Him, but no nation can succeed without God. Robespierre declared "the world cannot be worked without God; and rather than try to work it without God we had better invent a god." God comes near us to be trusted and loved—reveals His spirituality and power to satisfy our need and restrain idolatry, and exalts a nation to dignity and power, that He may be obeyed and honoured. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *The dignity of moral law.*

1. Divine in its origin, "which I teach you." 2. Complete in its nature, "not add to, nor diminish from." 3. Practical in its design, nothing speculative or temporary, "for to do them." "There is no greater evidence that Israel had a communication from heaven than this fact—that their morality is so pure, their apprehension of God so sublime, their definition of His nature so august, their whole intercourse with heaven so pure, so holy, so different from anything before or around them, that it seems scarcely possible to escape the conclusion that the Greeks were taught by themselves, that the Jews were the pupils of God."—*Cumming*.

Ver. 2. *Divine guardianship of the Bible.* God defends it from alteration according to the tastes and systems of men. Learn—1. The need of preserving its purity and integrity. 2. The danger of tampering with it. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life."

Ver. 3. *Baal-peor.* The facts of history according with human experience in vindicating God's law. "Your eyes have seen what the Lord did." Learn—1. The anger of God in its cause, manifestations, and results. 2. The mercy of God an encouragement to His people. "The allusion to that recent and appalling judgment was seasonably made as a powerful dis-

suasive against idolatry; and the fact mentioned was calculated to make a deep impression on the people who knew and felt the truth of it."

Ver. 4. *Cleave unto Jehovah.* 1. Personal attachment. "Ruth *clave* (adhered to, to be close behind), Ruth i. 14. 2. Constant fellowship. 3. Faithful service.

Vers. 5, 8. *The Bible the wisdom of a nation.* Consider—I. That the Bible brings greatness to a nation; because—1. When received and obeyed, it brings God's blessing with it. 2. It elevates the national character. II. That it is the duty of all to have a personal acquaintance with the Scriptures, and to instruct the young in them.—*Rev. S. Hayman, B.A.*

Vers. 7, 8. Here he represents their privileges and their duty in such significant and comprehensive terms as were peculiarly calculated to arrest their attention and engage their interest. The former—their national advantages—are described, and they are twofold:—1. God's readiness to hear and aid them at all times; and 2. The excellence of that religion in which they were instructed, set forth in the "statutes and judgments so righteous" which the law of Moses contained. Their duty corresponding to these pre-eminent advantages as a people was also twofold:—1. Their own faithful obedience to that law, and 2. Their obligation to imbue the minds of the young and rising generation with similar sentiments of reverence and respect for it.—*Jamieson's Com. in loco.*

FORGETFULNESS OF GOD'S LAW.—Verses 9–14.

God's judgments would benefit Israel only when remembered and reverently obeyed. To aid their obedience they must beware of forgetting the method and the circumstances in which the law was received. They must give personal heed to it and teach it to their children, that generations to come might fear the Lord.

**I. The law of God is given to impress the mind and lead to obedience.** "He commanded you to perform" (ver. 13). God is not indifferent, and we should not be, to the observance of his law. It demands attention, reverence and love. It should be supreme in our thoughts and life. Obedience should not be accidental, superficial work, but an intelligent, constant, direction of the heart and life. If the heart be gained, the whole man is governed—the affections, desires, and powers given up—but if God is forgotten, departs from the heart, he will soon be forsaken and disobeyed. "My son, forget not the law; but let thine heart keep my commandments."

**II. There is a tendency in man to forget and disobey this law.** We should not blame infirmity of memory—a special help is provided for that (John xiv. 26)—but wilful forgetfulness of heart. "The greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God, and after conversion to keep it with Him," says Flavel. "What is there that will not entice and allure so fickle a thing as the heart from God?" asks Mede. 1. *To forget, notwithstanding the evidence of the senses.* "Thine eyes have seen" (ver. 9). No length of time should efface such events from the memory. 2. *To forget in the immediate presence of God.* "Thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb" (ver. 10). This presence should check from sin, and prompt to obedience. "That his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Ex. xx. 20). 3. *To forget amid most terrible displays of God's majesty.* 1. *Fire.* "The mountain burned with fire." 2. *Darkness.* "Darkness, clouds, and thick darkness." 3. *Divine voice.* "The Lord spake unto you, ye heard the voice," ver. 12 (*cf.* Ex. xix. 16–18; xx. 18, 22). Such manifestations were intended to impress and benefit the people. This special favour, this awful display, should help them ever to remember and obey.

**III. The means of helping memory and prompting obedience given.** God gives direction, and provides against the dangers of His people. 1. *Personal attention.* "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently" (ver. 9). Religion requires caution, circumspection (Ep. v. 15), and personal care. Those cannot walk safely who walk carelessly. Such are the assaults without and the evils within, that we have to take care lest personal obedience should be forgotten. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, *lit.*, above all keeping" (Prov. iv. 23). 2. *Teaching the children.* "That they may teach their children" (ver. 10). Parents are depositors of the knowledge and law of God, and must teach and transmit them to their sons. The truth of God must mould the hearts of the rising generations, and be handed down to future ages. "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."

THE DANGERS OF IDOLATRY.—*Verses 15–19.*

Israel were to take heed, and neither to forget the covenant of God, nor offend Him by image worship. He had not been manifested to them in any form or representation. They were therefore to worship Him without any graven image or likeness, in a method corresponding to His spiritual nature.

**I. Idolatry in its forms.** Man has always felt his separation from, and craved for friendship with God. Failing to discover Him, human nature in its distress has made a desperate effort to realise God in gold and silver, in forms and ideas. But God has revealed Himself to man in His word and in His Son. Yet, strange to say, such is the perversity of our hearts, that we carve our own images, set up our own idols and cry, "These be thy gods." Three forms of idolatry are given. 1. *Man worship.* "The likeness of male or female." Ancestors and national leaders have been deified. Men have practised, and do now practice hero-worship, and set up their household gods (*Penates*). All superstitious reverence for any of our race is here forbidden. Worship God and not man. 2. *Animal worship.* This was common in Egypt. *Birds*, like the ibis and hawk; *four-footed beasts*, like the ox, dog, and cat; and *creeping things*, like the serpent, crocodile, and beetle (*cf.* Rom. i. 23), were prevalent forms of idolatry. 3. *Nature worship.* The light of sun and moon was distributed to the nations for their benefit, ministered to their convenience, and were therefore not to be revered. The heavenly bodies were regarded as symbols of deities, and Israel was in danger of being seduced by their worship. "In a word," says *Dean Goulborn*, "idolatry (or the surrounding the creature with the attributes of the Creator) is the original fundamental sin of man—the point of departure from which man started on the downward course, until he reached the lowest depths of wickedness"—Who changed (exchanged) the truth of (*i.e.*, concerning) God into a lie (an idol, or falsehood) and worshipped (adored) and served (in rites and ceremonies) the creature (in various forms) more than (often along with, and without) the Creator, who is blessed for ever." Rom. i. 25.

**II. Idolatry in its consequences.** Men ever possessed a knowledge of the existence and attributes of God, but the affections have prevented the mind from discerning and preserving the truth taught by nature and "manifest in them" (Rom. i. 20). God was not recognised and glorified. Darkness and idolatry followed the rejection of light, and terrible were the consequences. 1. *Idolatry degrades the Divine nature.* God is invisible, and cannot be represented by images; spiritual, and should not be materialised; omnipresent, and must not be localised. An infinite spiritual and Divine nature can never become finite, material and human. To make any image of God is to lower and degrade Him. "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device (sculptured by art and ingenuity of man), Acts xvii. 29. 2. *Idolatry corrupts human nature.* "Lest ye corrupt yourselves" (ver. 16). We are children of God, and our filial relation protests against idolatry. What is spiritual in us can never be pencilled or carved. Spirituality is lost by representing it in sense; and since man is corrupt, cannot make a god superior to himself, and ever becomes like the object he worships; how foolish, how degrading is idolatry! "They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them" (Psa. cxv. 8). 3. *Idolatry perils human life.* This truth is confirmed in the life of Moses (ver. 21), the history of Israel and heathen nations. God is the source of *natural life*, but if forsaken, this life is cut off from its source and centre and shortened by vice. *Spiritual*



life can never be sustained in power and beauty away from God. "Take ye, therefore, good heed unto yourselves" (ver. 15).

"Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone  
To rev'rence what is ancient, and can plead  
A course of long observance for its use,  
That even servitude, the worst of ills,  
Because deliver'd down from sire to son,  
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing."—*Cowper*.

### THE IRON FURNACE.—*Verse 20.*

A furnace for smelting iron was round in shape, often thirty feet deep, requiring heat most intense. In this figure we have a type of—

**I. Intense Affliction.** Israel in Egypt were grievously afflicted, had to serve in bondage and under cruel taskmasters. "They made their lives bitter," and all "their service, wherein they made them serve, was with vigour" (Ex. i. 11–14). God often sends affliction deep and most severe. Deliverance is like rescue from the fire. "I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace" (Jer. xi. 4).

**II. Benevolent Design.** This furnace is kindled and tempered for some merciful purpose. 1. *Real discipline.* "What need," asks Philip Henry, "have the people of God of afflictions? The same that our bodies have of physic; that trees have of pruning; that gold and silver have of the furnace." God thus purifies our character and fits us for his service. 2. *Preparation for usefulness.* "To be unto Him a people of inheritance." A people holy, honourable, and useful. "Suppose, Christian, the furnace to be seven times hotter, it is but to make you seven times better; fiery trials make golden Christians."—*Dyer*.

Eminent usefulness on earth, and heaven with its glory, are gained through chastened sufferings. Richard Boyle, earl of Cork, rose from the humblest station to the highest rank in life. After passing through strange and most trying circumstances he adopted as his motto, and had engraved upon his tomb the words, "God's providence is my inheritance." "We went through fire and through water (greatest trials); but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place (*lit.*, well-watered place; abundance of blessings)" (Ps. lxi. 12).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 15. Take heed.** These many cautions note our proneness to this evil above others. This appeareth somewhat in children so delighted with pictures, and in that *idolomania* of these Jews, of the eastern churches, and of the synagogue of Rome.—*Trapp*.

**Ver. 19. Sun, moon, and stars.** Note 1. The use and design in the heavenly bodies, given for the benefit of all mankind (Gen. i. 14–18; Psa. civ. 19). Hence cannot be appropriated to one people, and absurd to worship as God's

what are intended to be servants to man. 2. The proneness of man to put the creature in the place of the Creator. "Lest thou shouldest be driven," *i.e.*, drawn or constrained; by *sense*, "when thou seest the sun;" by *customs* of other nations, and by *natural tendency*. Objects of nature should be viewed with admiration, gratitude, and love. Nature should lead up to Nature's God. But what proneness in man to abuse these gifts; to ignore God and degrade ourselves!

"The landscape has His praise, but not its author."



Ver. 20. *A people of inheritance.* This special relationship is—1. A protest against idolatry. 2. An argument for gratitude and obedience. To abandon God's worship for gross and debasing idolatry would be greatest folly and shameless ingratitude. 3. A reason for purity and spirituality of worship. *People of inheritance.* 1. Purchased or acquired by God. Israel is viewed as God's own by a long series of mighty deeds performed for their deliverance. Hence said to be "redeemed"

(Ex. vi. 6) or "purchased" (Ex. xv. 16). 2. Owned by God. A possession which God has gained specially for Himself. 3. Should therefore be devoted to God alone. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar *treasure* (*segullah*—valuable property—1 Chr. xxix. 3; Ecc. ii. 8) unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine," Ex. xix. 5; (*cf.* Mal. iii. 17; 1 Pet. ii. 9).

#### WARNINGS IN PERSONAL HISTORY.—*Verses 21, 22.*

Deliverance from Egypt reminds Moses that God did not permit *him* to enter Canaan. His punishment ought to be a warning to them. "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes." Learn—

**I. Impressive events occur in Personal History.** Every life is filled with such events. Our sins, overruled by God's sovereign mercy or displeasure, deprive us of gaining honours and possessions. Times and seasons are fixed, made impressive by special displays from God. With sorrow we "remember the days of darkness," and looking back exclaim in submission "I must die in this land."

**II. These impressive events in Personal History a warning to others.** Our personal sufferings are not only profitable to ourselves but may be to others. "I have sinned and have been punished" says Moses "for your sake." "You are privileged to enter Canaan and I am not. Beware, therefore, and provoke not God as I did through unbelief." "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant."

#### WARNINGS AGAINST IDOLATRY.—*Verses 23, 24.*

The people are warned anew against forsaking God, who is jealous for his glory, and making and worshipping graven images. "Take heed," etc.—

**I. Idolatry shows base ingratitude to God.** God had done wonderful things for Israel. They had resolved not to forget Him, yet how ungrateful and prone to go astray! No miraculous displays without can eradicate evils within. How great has God's goodness been to us, yet how thoughtless and ungrateful have we been! Forgetful of His presence, precepts, and providence! "How unsuitable is it for us who live only by kindness (Tit. iii. 4-7) to be unthankful," says Edwards.

**II. Idolatry violates God's commands.** "Which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee." God's law demands our love, dethrones our lusts, and requires constant and unswerving obedience. To forget is to ignore God, and to live as if He did not exist. Thus men refuse submission, throw off allegiance to God, and choose idols. "How oft did they rebel against Him."

**III. Idolatry rouses God's anger.** "The Lord thy God is a consuming

fire," etc. Anger is not the natural feeling of God towards man. "God is love." What then causes the wrath of God? It is God's righteous opposition to sin. He is jealous for His honour, and will not spare those guilty of idolatry. "For the wrath of God is revealed (in the moral government of the world) from heaven against all ungodliness (sin against God), and unrighteousness (sin against man) of men, who hold (keep down) the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. i. 18)

#### PUNISHMENTS OF APOSTACY.—*Verses 25-28.*

Warnings against idolatry are enforced by predicted punishments upon future generations who should turn from Jehovah and corrupt themselves by idolatry. Canaan was granted on condition of constant obedience. If they forsook God their title to the land would be forfeited. They would be diminished in number, dispersed among the heathen and compelled to serve dumb idols, so that their choice would become their punishment.

**I. Evils would be entailed upon future generations.** Nature, like a Nemesis, follows transgressors afar. The sources of life cannot be poisoned without the stream being affected. "Children's children" might remain long in the land, but they would inherit the tendencies and suffer for the sins of their progenitors. The family of Saul suffered for his great malice against David. Achan perished not alone in his iniquity (Josh. xxii. 20). Thus God visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."

**II. National life would be destroyed.** Severed from God they would lose their inheritance, and cease to be a chosen people. 1. *They would be reduced in number.* "Ye shall be left few in number." 2. *They would be scattered among other nations.* "The Lord shall scatter you among the nations"—as in the captivity of Babylon. The author had in view, says Keil, "all the dispersions which would come upon the rebellious nation in future times, even down to the dispersion under the Romans, which continues still; so that Moses contemplated the punishment in its fullest extent." 3. *They would be rejected as a people.* "Ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed." This has been fulfilled in the uprooting of all the tribes of Israel, in their dispersion through all nations, and in the miseries they have endured. What a solemn warning to those who forsake God.

**III. Retributive consequences would follow.** They would become perfect slaves to other peoples, and forced to render homage to senseless idols. As their sin, so their punishment. They had dishonoured God by graven images, so they would be degraded by service to abominable idols. Evils which we esteem pleasures at first, often become our tyrants, and drag us down to misery. If we make indulgences our gods, they will become our degradation. "They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them."

"Oh, blind to truth, and God's whole scheme below,  
Who fancy bliss to vice; to virtue, woe."—*Pope.*

#### THE BLESSINGS OF TRIBULATION.—*Verses 27-30.*

If Israel in their dispersion and trouble turn with all their hearts to God he will deliver them and not utterly cast them off. He is merciful as well as jealous, and mindful of the covenant which he swore unto their fathers (*cf.* Lev. xxvi. 40-42; Neh. ix. 31).

**I. Afflictions are corrective in their design.** "Whither the Lord shall lead

you." God not only permitted Israel to be carried off, but lead them into other lands, gently and kindly led them with special design (ver. 27). It is a mercy to be corrected when we might have been destroyed. Afflictions, exile and disappointment are intended to check our sins and preserve our souls. "None is more unhappy," says Seneca, "than he who never felt adversity."

**II. Afflictions are tempered with mercy in their character.** Fallen angels were left to their eternal doom; but sinful man is kept from destruction, corrected, and brought back to God. Backsliders may be punished, but God will forgive. "Mercy rejoiceth (glorieth, triumphs over) against judgments" (Jas. ii. 13).

**III. Afflictions are blessed in their results.** "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him." They often lead to repentance, removal of sin, and return to God. From the deepest distress and the most distant apostacy God brings His children. David went astray before he was afflicted. Manasseh long forsook God, but sought His face when put in sore distress, and the prodigal returned to his father's house when he felt his helpless, lost condition. King Alfred prayed that God would often send him sickness to keep him obedient and devout. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 24. *God a consuming fire.* There are stern aspects of God as well as mild. The figure of fire sets forth the anger of God against sin. 1. How kindled. 2. Material to keep it alive. 3. The difficulty of extinguishing it; and 4. The fearful consumption it makes—swift and overwhelming destruction. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29).

*God a jealous God.* Jealousy applied to God does not mean suspicion, but readiness to vindicate His glory and law. "Not in the sense in which He was regarded as 'jealous' by some of the Greeks, who supposed that success or eminence of any kind provoked Him (Herod iii. 40, 125), but jealous of His own honour," one who will not see "His glory given to another (Is. xlii. 8; xlviii. 11), or allow rivals to dispute His sole and absolute sovereignty" (cf. Ex. xxiv. 14; Deut. v. 9; vi. 15; Josh. xxiv. 19). Hence jealous. 1. For His glory. 2. For the purity of His worship; and 3. For His people. *Jealous.* And should therefore be served truly, that there be no halting; and totally that there be no halving (Heb. xii. 28, 29). —*Trapp.*

Vers. 25, 28. *Remained long in the land.* 1. The condition of possessing it. 2. The danger of forgetting this condition. Carnally secure and forsaking God, and growing old in the land. 3. The punishment that would follow from this forgetfulness. (a) Forewarned. Heaven and earth witness. (b) Severe dispersion and degradation.

Ver. 26. Heaven and earth—1. Witness for God's existence. 2. Warning against sin. 3. Testify to His righteousness in punishing transgression.

Vers. 29–31. Israel's sin, misery, repentance, and restoration.

Ver. 29. *I. Seeking God.* 1. Earnestly; with all thy heart. 2. Intelligently; with all thy soul. *II. Inducements to seek God.* 1. Merciful in Himself. 2. Mindful of His promise; and 3. Able to help in tribulation. "Sweet and sour make the best sauce. Promises and menaces mixed soonest operate upon the heart. The sun of righteousness loves not to be set in a cloud, nor the God of consolation to have his children comfortless." —*Trapp.*



DAYS THAT ARE PAST.—*Verses 32-34.*

Moses reminds Israel of God's goodness and miraculous dealings in their choice, deliverance, and instruction. Remembrance of days past should prompt them to obedience and love.

**I. Days past reveal the special goodness of God.** God has not left the world to chance and inflexible laws. Nothing can surprise or thwart Him. He rules all creatures and events, showing mercy to those that love Him, and punishing those who rebel against Him. 1. *In creating them.* Our natural birth and regeneration are the acts of Divine mercy. "The Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee (fashioned into shape) O Israel" (Is. xliii. 1). 2. *In delivering them from danger.* As Israel were rescued from Egypt, God's people now are redeemed from enemies by wonderful and extraordinary ways, "with an outstretched arm, and with great judgment" (Ex. vi. 6). 3. *In teaching them by various ways.* Each age has its own special revelations. In the Bible we have a record "of days that are past" in patriarchal, prophetic, and apostolic truth. God's faithfulness and mercy are written unmistakably and should be read most devoutly in those wondrous days.

**II. Days past are filled with warnings and examples.** "History is philosophy teaching by examples." Jewish history is full of instructive lessons. They enjoyed mercies never given to any other nation, or grace never heard of since the creation of the world. These deeds brighten days of old and make them powerful now. They are the gifts of God to the present age, and the lives of good men and bad men are for all time.

"There is a history in all men's lives  
Figuring the nature of the times deceased."—*Shakespeare.*

**III. Days past should be remembered for future instruction.** Human experience should not be forgotten. We should be more virtuous and obedient as days roll on. Every age should be an advance upon the past, and should be more powerful for good. It is sad when in the life of a nation, or the life of a man, God is forsaken, and former days lamented for as better than the present. In former days men lived long, were specially trained, and have handed down their treasures to posterity. "Enquire I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of (the records) their fathers. For (the reason given) we are but of yesterday and know nothing, (compared to them) because our days upon earth are a shadow. Shall not they teach thee and tell thee (how God deals with men in this world) and utter words out of their heart (wise sayings result of careful observation) Job. viii. 8.

There is something very solemn in the thought of "days that are past"—past, never to return; while their moral results remain for ever as subjects of future responsibility. We have to reckon on days past; for time, like tide, stays for no man.

"'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,  
And ask them what report they bore to heaven;  
And how they might have borne more welcome news."

Let us then summon our past days, and ask what they have to say. First, concerning *the world*. Mrs. Savage remarks, "I never knew any of the people of the world praise it at parting." No wonder at this. They have been too much in it, seen too much of it, and been too much deceived by it to recommend it to others. Solomon's verdict is, "Vanity of vanities"—"vanity" if they succeed, and "vexation of spirit" if disappointed. What a miserable

painted cheat is the world! Enough to induce us to forsake it, and comply with the admonition. "Forsake the foolish and live, and go in the way of understanding." Secondly, ask what they have to say *concerning ourselves*. Have they not shown us many things with which we were formerly unacquainted, and filled us with surprise and regret. How many convictions violated, how many resolutions broken! Life has been very unlike the picture our early imagination drew—our dependences often proved broken reeds, not only unable to sustain hopes, but have "pierced us through with many sorrows." Will days not tell us that life has been a chequered scene? Review them again under a sense of unworthiness of the least mercy, and of all the truth which God has shown us. If we have been in the wilderness, have we not found grace in the sanctuary? Have we not had the fiery cloudy pillar to guide us, manna to sustain us, and waters to refresh us? Can we refuse to say, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life?"—*Jay*.

#### INDUCEMENTS TO OBEDIENCE.—*Verses 32-38.*

If God has performed such wonderful things for His people, they were put under obligations of gratitude and love. They should ever obey Him for mercies and privileges unknown to other people.

**I. They were remarkable in their history.** Their calling, deliverance, and whole history was full of the supernatural. 1. *They had been delivered from bondage most terrible.* Egypt is a type of sin in its misery and power. But God's power is greater than Satan and sin. When God "assayed to go," deliverance was sure. 2. *Delivered in a way most striking.* By *temptations*—judgments inflicted upon Pharaoh and his people to test or try them; by *signs*—tokens of the supernatural in their nature and design; by *wonders*—the objective side of miracle, the extraordinary and marvellous; by *war*—conflict at the Red Sea (*cf.* Ex. xiv. 14; xv. 3); by a *mighty hand and stretched out arm* (Ex. vi. 6; xiv. 8; Deut. xxvi. 8); and by *great terrors* in the minds of Egyptians through Divine operations (Ps. cv. 27, 28; cvi. 21). 3. Hence *deliverance unsurpassed.* Such had never been heard of from the beginning of the world (*ver.* 32). It was unexampled in method and purpose. All to prove the sovereign love and grace of God. The experience and history of God's people outstrip the discipline of ancient Israel. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul."

**II. They were wonderful in their training.** They were inspired with salutary fear, impressed with the awful signs of God's presence which shadow forth the majesty of His nature. 1. *Trained supernaturally.* They heard a voice direct from heaven in condescension to their moral condition and mental capacity. 2. *Trained with awful symbols.* God spoke to His children by sensible signs to impress their minds. What more terrible than thunder and lightning, smoke and flames of fire! Surely we should love Him "whose terror should not make us afraid." 3. *Trained with a special design.* "Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God" (*ver.* 35).

**III. They were providential in their settlement.** They were dearer to God than any other people. Nations were driven out from their lands; Egyptians and Canaanites were given for their ransom, and people "greater and mightier" than they were, had to prepare them a settlement. God locates his people, prepares their possessions, and Israel's foes must contribute to Israel's welfare. "Thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; thou

didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them," etc. (Psa. xlv. 2, 3).

JEHOVAH GOD ALONE.—*Verses 39, 40.*

Because God had loved their fathers, and had chosen, redeemed, and settled them in Canaan, Israel were to "consider," never to forget this, and acknowledge that Jehovah alone is God and that there is no other in the universe beside Him.

I. Jehovah alone is the self-existent personal God. This great truth was revealed to the Jews by the destruction of heathen deities, the punishment of their worshippers, and the wonderful events in their history. God is one supreme intelligent being. 1. *Alone in His supremacy in heaven and earth.* "God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath." When the might of worldly power was strongest, and idolatry as a system was prevalent, "all the gods of the nations" were declared "idols" (*lit., vanities or nullities*) Ps. xcvi. 5. They were denied superiority and even existence. "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods" (Ps. xcv. 3). 2. *Alone in His government of the world.* Not a *petty* God inferior to heathen gods; but without rival and companion. His government is supreme, not divided among "gods many and lords many;" universal, over all agencies and all spheres; and sole in its authority and design. 3. *Alone in His claims upon men.* He demands and deserves universal obedience. We are to love Him with all our hearts. But how could we love God if He were not a person? He is not a set of principles nor code of laws; but the true and living God, infinitely distant from finite creatures, yet definitely related to us as law-giver and father. Hence spring His claims upon us, and our duty towards Him. We should render to Him gratitude, praise, and loyal obedience, "for the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised."

II. The practical recognition of this truth. "Know therefore this day." Know not simply intellectually or theoretically, but practically. "Consider it in *thine heart*." Speculation abounds, science puts forth its "laws" and "natural forces," and men talk about abstract principles as "infinite wisdom" and "almighty power." Take away a personal God, a loving father; then we are left like children in the orphan asylum—clothed, fed, and governed, perhaps, but objects of pity rather than of love and mercy. We have no resting-place for our affections, no object of worship, and no hope of purity and peace. How needful then, in "this day" of infidelity and irreligion to receive and defend this truth. 1. *In its influence upon the heart.* "In *thine heart*," the centre and regulative power of life. 2. *In its influence upon the life.* "Thou shalt keep His statutes" (ver. 40). Our obedience must spring from love, and be voluntary, absolute, and universal. The preacher sums up the *whole of man*; not *duty* only, but happiness and all that concerns him "in fearing God and keeping His commandments" (Ecc. xii. 13).

THE CITIES OF REFUGE.—*Verses 41–43.*

Israel were yet on the east side of Jordan, and after the conclusion of one discourse (iv. 1–40) Moses inserts these verses before the other (ver. 1, etc.) "In thus severing the three cities of refuge he carried out a previous command of God (Num. xxxv. 14), and so followed up his exhortations to obedience by setting a punctual example of it, as far as opportunity was given him." Consider—



**I. The design of these cities.** "That the slayer might flee thither, who should kill his neighbour unawares." They were not to shelter the guilty from punishment, but to secure a fair trial and respite from death. The accidental homicide was protected from the avenger of blood. They set forth—1. *God's regard for human life.* Life was not to be cut down at random. Private revenge was to be checked, and feelings of humanity were to be cultivated. 2. *God's legislative wisdom.* In the rude unsettled state of the nation, rights were restricted to certain persons, opportunities were given of establishing innocence, and grievances were removed by the vindication of law. Men were taught to discriminate between one crime and another, and justice was administered with mercy. 3. *They typify refuge in Jesus Christ.* In these sanctuaries fugitives were safe; certain decrees confirmed their security. To these cities manslayers were directed to run. Often they had to flee for life with not a moment to spare. Men are guilty, exposed to justice, and can find no safety from the terrors of broken law, except in Christ Jesus. Here is safety and perfect redemption for all "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

**II. The influence of these cities.** They would consecrate the land, and prevent its stain from innocent blood. They would confirm and strengthen the possessions taken from the Canaanites, and lay the foundation for just government. They proved the goodness of God, and helped to cultivate a mild and forgiving spirit towards man.

#### THE REPETITION OF DIVINE LAW.—Verse 44-47.

These verses begin an address which embraces "the central part and substance of the book, which now follows in twenty-two chapters." They contain a fuller description of the law, with a notice of time and place in which the address was given.

**I. Law clearly explained.** "In ver. 45, this 'law' (*thōrah*) is summarily described as consisting of 'testimonies, statutes, and judgments;' *i.e.*, commandments considered first as manifestations or attestations (*eydōth*) of the will of God; next, as duties of moral obligation (*khūkīm*), and thirdly, as precepts securing the mutual rights of men (*nishpātim*)."—*Sp. Com.* The law is repeated and explained that we may know what is due to God and our fellow-creatures, and that obedience tends to happiness and life.

**II. Law enforced by reasonable claims.** In urging the people to obey the statutes of God, Moses had powerful motives. 1. *They were in better circumstances.*—Not at the foot of Sinai, amidst thunder, fire, and smoke, but on the borders of the promised land. 2. *God's goodness had been displayed to them.* (a) Their enemies had been slain. Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites "whom Moses and the children of Israel smote." (b) "They had already received the first fruits of those promises, the full fruition of which was to be consequent on their fulfilment of that covenant now again about to be rehearsed to them in its leading features." (c) Hence their surroundings were comfortable, bright and merciful "under the springs of Pisgah." Such experience, history, and privileges, put them under the deepest obligation! God's claims are great upon us. But "one great cause of our insensibility to the goodness of our Creator," says Paley, "is the very extensiveness of his bounty."

THE AMORITES DISPOSSESSED.—*Verses 44–49.*

The importance of the defeat of the two kings of the Amorites leads Moses again to mention it. Israel must never forget that God had given them this possession, not through their own merits, but in fulfilment of His promise. We may learn from this oft-repeated reference—

**I. That the continued existence and prosperity of a nation depend upon its virtue and obedience to God.** Not upon its wealth, population or defences; cities, fleets and armies can be swept away when God is forsaken.

**II. That when virtue and obedience are wanting God often dispossesses a nation.** Splendid dynasties have fled into exile; thrones most powerful have been overturned, and God has extirpated one people to prepare for another. This is—1. A natural law. 2. A fact in history; and 3. A warning to us. “The Lord will rend the kingdom from us, and give it to a neighbour of ours that is better than we are” (1 Sam. xv. 28).

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 39. *Consider it*, etc. 1. God’s law has little influence upon the heart and life. Its precepts apt to glide from our memory. 2. Meditation is needful to remind us. “Consider it (*lit.* bring back) into thine heart.” “Meditation is the bellows of the affections; ‘while I was musing the fire burned’ (Ps. xxxix. 3). ‘The reason we come away so cold from reading the word is, because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation.’” (*Watson*). 3. God gives help in this meditation—(a) By special times “This day.” (b) By special subjects “Know that the Lord is God.” (c) By special requests “I command thee.”

Ver. 40. *With thy children.* The benefit of obedience. 1. To the present generation—“It may go well with thee.” 2. To the future generation—“Thy children after thee.”

Vers. 41–43. The cities of refuge in their names, purpose and situation.

Ver. 44–45. The law. 1. In its minute description. 2. In the peculiar circumstances or place of its repetition. (a) “Over against Beth-peor.”—In dangerous proximity to the idol temple of Moab. (b) In new territories.—In the land of Sihon.”

Ver. 49. *The Springs of Pisgah*, fertilizing the land may suggest a discourse on the joys and various advantages that flow from heavenly prospects. How much the present life is benefitted and beautified by thoughts and purposes that flow from views of the heavenly life. Every true Pisgah in our life, *i.e.*, every point of exalted meditation, should be a fountain-head of holy thoughts and action.—*Bib. Museum*.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1–4. *Hearken.* How much more doth it concern us to be hearers ere we offer to be teachers of others. He gathers that hears, he spends that teacheth. If we spend before we gather we shall soon prove bankrupts.—(*Bp.*

*Hall*). “That it may please thee to give to all thy people increase of grace to hear meekly thy word, to receive it with pure affection, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.”

Vers. 5, 6.—*Statutes*. Look not for another Master, thou hast the oracles of God. No one teaches like them. Ignorance of the Scriptures is the cause of all evils.—(*Chrysostom*). There is no book on which we can rest in a dying moment but the bible.—*Selden*.

Vers. 7, 8. So great. The Jews were more than the *capsarii nostri* and librarians; they had anticipative advantages, and were to be the first to enjoy the gospel privileges, as well as to be the almoners of Messianic blessings to the world (Rom. iii. 2). They were like trustees of an estate who were themselves to receive the ground-rents till such time as the leases fill in, and then they were both to participate in the increased rent roll and to be the channel through which the other heirs were to share the inheritance with themselves.—*Neil*.

Ver. 8. When the African prince enquired from our gracious queen the secrets of England's glory, she handed him a copy of the Scriptures, and said, "*That* is the secret of England's greatness."

Ver. 9. *Teach them*. "A pious education is the best way of providing for a family and the surest foundation for its prosperity."

Vers. 9–14. *Lest thou forget*. 'Tis a general fault, that the most common and frequent, the most obvious and conspicuous favours of God, the constant rising of the sun upon us, the descent of fruitful showers, the recourse of temperate seasons, the continuance of our life, the helps of obtaining virtue and becoming happy, we commonly little mind or regard, and consequently seldom return thanks for them.—*Dr. Barrow*.

Vers. 15–18. *Similitude*. It was not until the days of Hebrew decline that a narrow literalism pressed the words into an absolute prohibition of the arts of painting and sculpture. Moses himself sanctioned the cherubic

forms above the mercy-seat; the brazen serpent, and the lillies and pomegranates of the golden candlestick. Solomon had lions on the steps of his throne, oxen under his "molten sea," and palm trees, flowers, and cherubims on the walls of the temple, "within and without" (1 Kings vi. 29). What this commandment forbade was the worship of God under a material form. It asserted the spirituality of Jehovah. While in the rest of the world there was scarcely a single nation or tribe which did not "make to itself" images of the gods, and regard the images themselves with superstitious veneration. In Judaism alone was this seductive practice disallowed. God would have no likeness made of Him, no representation that might cloud the conception of his entire separation from matter, his purely spiritual essence.—*Com. for Eng. Readers*.

Ver. 19. *Heaven*. Instead of stretching our thoughts to the mystery of creation, and soaring above the stars, when we think of God, which for the most part, is setting Him at a distance from us, it may be of great use to consider Him, as present in the room or little spot where we are, and as it were circumscribed within it, in all His glory, majesty, and purity.—*Adam*.

Ver. 23. *Forbidden*. There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious.—*Bacon*.

Ver. 24. *Jealous*. Many attempts have been made to show that jealousy is unworthy of the Divine nature; but that the one only God, if there be but one only God, should claim and exact under some penalties an undivided allegiance is natural, reasonable, and in harmony with the most exalted conceptions of the Divine essence. If God looked with indifference upon idolatry, it would imply that He cared little for His human creatures; that like the Deity of Epicurius having once created man and the world, He thenceforth



paid no attention to them.—*Com. for Eng. Readers*).

Ver. 25. *Corrupt*. The heathen corruptions were produced and sanctioned by the heathen mythology and idolatry; while Christian nations are corrupt in spite of and in direct opposition to Christianity, which raises the highest standard of virtue and acts continually on the world as a purifying and sanctifying power.—*P. Schaff*.

"God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man."—*Shakespeare*.

Ver. 26. *Witness*. There was never miracle wrought by God to convert an atheist because the light of nature might have led him to confess a God. *Bacon*.

Ver. 27–30. *Tribulation*. Afflictions are God's furnace, by which He cleanses His people from their dross. As gold and silver are refined, so men are purified. The process is never complete so long as any dross remains. As Tennyson suggestively says—

"Life is not like idle ore;  
But iron dug from central gloom,  
And heated not with burning fears,  
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,  
And battered with the shocks of doom,  
To shape and use."

Vers. 33, 36. The phenomena accumulated to impress the people seem to have been loud thunder, fierce flashes of lightning, a fire that streamed up from the mountain to the middle of the sky, dense volumes of smoke pro-

ducing an awful and weird darkness, a trembling of the mountain as by a continuous earthquake, a sound like the blast of a trumpet loud and prolonged, and then, finally, a clear, penetrating voice (*cf.* Ex. xix. 16–20). So awful a manifestation has never been made at any other place or time (ver. 32), nor will be until the consummation of all things.—*Com. for Eng. Readers*.

Ver. 39. *Lord*. He is not only "God," but "the Lord" or Governor. We know Him only by His properties, by the wise and admirable structure of things around us, and by their final causes; we admire Him on account of His perfections; we venerate and worship Him on account of His government.—*Sir Isaac Newton*.

Vers. 41–43. Cities of refuge were appointed—three on each side of Jordan—with straight and good roads leading to them from every direction, to any of which the murderer might fly; and if he got into it before the avenger overtook him, he was safe from his rage until he had a fair trial. If it was found that he was guilty of wilful murder, he was delivered up to the avenger to be destroyed, and not even the altar was allowed to protect him; but if it was found that the murder had not been intentional, he was allowed to remain in the city of refuge, where none might come to do him evil; and on the death of the high priest he might return in security to his own home.—*Dr. Cox*.

## CHAPTER V.

CRITICAL REMARKS.—The Deuteronomy, or second law, is now given and enforced. But Moses refers to the covenant relation between Jehovah and Israel, and recapitulates the Sinaitic code in its most important features.

Ver. 1. Moses called marks the publicity and importance of the address.

Ver. 2. Our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but with the nation as an organic whole, those identified with the people who entered into the covenant at Sinai.

Ver. 4. Face to face, not in visible form, but familiarly, near as one person to another.

Ver. 5. Even as regards the Decalogue this statement has its application. Moses "stood between the Lord and them" whilst it was delivered, and perhaps it was (Ex. xix. 19) addressed directly to Moses, though in accents audible to the assembly beneath. Thus was the law, including even the "Ten Words," "in the hands of a mediator" (Gal. iii. 19).—*Sp. Com.*

Ver. 6. An introduction to the commandments which follow, and which are given with slight verbal alteration the same as in Ex. xx.

**Vers. 7-16. First table of the Law.**

Ver. 7. Before me, *lit.* beyond me (Gen. xlviii. 22 ; Ps. xvi. 2), in addition to me (Gen. xxxi. 50 ; Deut. xix. 9) ; meaning by the side of me, or in my presence.

Ver. 8. All symbolic representations prohibited. *Heaven*, stars or birds ; *earth*, all kinds of animals ; *water*, fish and water creatures.

Ver. 9. Jealous, who gives not to another honour due to himself (Is. xlii. 8 ; xlviii. 11), nor tolerates the worship of any idol. *Visiting*, not *charging* the iniquity, but permitting its consequences to flow beyond persons or nations committing it.

Ver. 10. The third and fourth generation are *punished* (visited) ; but *mercy* is shown to the thousandth.

Ver. 11. In vain, *lit.*, lift up the name of Jehovah thy God in vain. Lift up, take up a proverb (Num. xxiii. 7), a song (Ps. lxxxi. 3), or a prayer (Is. xxxvii. 3). All employment of God's name for vain and unworthy purposes forbidden ; not merely false swearing ; but profane and idle swearing in daily life. *Guiltless*, left unpunished.

Vers. 12-15. Sabbath, already in existence has to be *sanctified* (a festival-keeper, Ex. xvi. 23) to be observed a day of rest, belonging to the Lord and consecrated to Him. Neither man nor beast to work. "The exhortation is pointed by reminding the people that they too were formerly servants themselves. The bondage in Egypt and the deliverance from it are not assigned as grounds for the institution of the Sabbath, which is of far older date (*cf.* Gen. ii. 3) ; but rather as suggesting motives for the religious observance of that institution. The exodus was an entrance into rest from the toils of the house of bondage, and is thought actually to have occurred on the Sabbath day. Hence arose special and national obligations with respect to the Sabbath, on which it is exactly within the scope of Moses' purpose in Deuteronomy to insist."—*Sp. Com.*

Ver. 16. Well with thee. An insertion not in Ex. xx. 11, but found in Ep. vi. 3, and amplifying the promise of long life.

Vers. 17-21. Second table of the law. The enactments are from outward deeds (*kill, adultery, steal*), to words, (false witness and lies) to inward desires (*covet and desire*).

Ver. 22. Added, *lit.*, "He did not add," *i.e.*, He spoke no more with the great voice directly to the people, but addressed all other communications to them through Moses.

Vers. 23-33. Here we have a fuller account than that in Ex. xx. 18-21. God's reply (vers. 18-31) to the people's request is not given in the summary of Exodus. The people were alarmed at the awful phenomena in which God revealed His glory and uttered His will ; entreated Moses to stand between as mediator, that they might not die, and then promised to hear and obey. God approved the request, because it indicated a feeling of unfitness for intercourse with Him, but added—

Vers. 28, 29. "Would that they always had this feeling—this heart in them to fear me, that it might be well with them and their children."

Vers. 30, 31. The people are directed to their tents ; Moses is appointed mediator, to whom God would give all law for the people.

Vers. 32, 33. Events are brought to a close by an exhortation to careful observance of the commandments, never to turn aside, right or left, from the way pointed out, that it may be well with them (*cf.* cp. iv. 40).

**THE COVENANT IN HOREB.—Verses 1-5.**

Moses was about to recapitulate the law. It was fitting to remind them of the circumstances in which it was given, and the special relation between God and His people.

**I. The method in which the covenant was given.** Jewish and other writers have speculated on this subject, but we can only reconcile the various statements in Old and New Testaments (Ex. xx. 2 ; Deut. v. 4 ; *cf.* Acts vii. 53 ; Gal. iii. 19 ; Heb. ii. 2) by remembering the spirituality of God, and His special agency in the revelation of His will. From this narrative we learn that—1. *The covenant was specially made with them.* “The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers.” It is specially with us, a covenant not of circumcision (Acts vii. 8) but ten commandments. Light gradually shines, and children know more of God’s will than their forefathers. 2. *The covenant was given familiarly to them.* “The Lord talked with you face to face,” as one friend with another. Not in dreams and dark visions as of old (Job iv. 12, 13), but directly, openly and clearly. 3. *The covenant was given amid divine splendour.* “Out of the midst of the fire.” The natural phenomena and peculiar surroundings were intended to impress their minds and beget right feelings and willing obedience. 4. *The covenant was given through a mediator.* “I stood between the Lord and you”—at your request, and by God’s approval ; to allay your fears and preserve your lives. We have Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. xii. 24) to remove our guilt and intercede with God.

**II. The obligations under which the covenant put the people.** Special favours beget special obligations. This covenant is with us, reminds us of our privileged condition and reciprocal duty. 1. God’s commands *must be performed.* “Do them.” Not talk and speculate about them. We must personally accept the terms and bind ourselves to constant performance. 2. God’s commands *must be understood* before they can be performed. “That ye may learn them.” Obedience must be intelligent, “a reasonable service,” not mechanical. Intellect is concerned as well as heart. “With all thy heart ; with all thy mind.” 3. God’s commands *must be heard* before they can be understood. “Hear, O Israel.” They must be observed and attentively considered. The ears must be employed for God. “I speak in your ears.” Things heard must not slip or glide out of our treacherous hearts and memories as out of leaking vessels (Heb. ii. 1). Thus there can be no obligation without law to found it upon, and no law in religion but from God. God, therefore, must be heard, feared, and glorified. Loyal obedience is necessary, not to purchase salvation, but to please God and benefit men. “That ye may live, and that it may be well with you.”

### THE FIRST COMMANDMENT : GOD’S SUPREMACY OVER OUR AFFECTIONS.

#### Verses 6, 7.

The decalogue, or ten words, have been appropriately divided into two parts, called tables of the law. It is a natural division founded on the distinct character of the precepts themselves, and sanctioned by our Saviour in Matt. xxii. 37–40. In one sense the law was a republication of the law of nature. But sin had corrupted the original impress on the human heart, hence it was necessary to make it the basis of the national constitution with Israel, and to preserve it as the rule of life for all mankind. Man is instructed, and God is exalted in this moral law.

**I. God must be the sole object of our affection.** “Thou shalt have none other Gods before me.” Our duties arise from our relations. Our relation to God is the earliest, most essential, and most lasting ; regard to Him therefore as our God is our first and highest duty. There are systems of morality which omit, or, slightly notice, the high claims of God upon our hearts, which exalt domestic and social duties, and which sustain and adorn the



relation of friendship and the claims of politics and philanthropy. These systems are from men, but the first commandment from God is "thou shalt have no other gods but *me*." 1. No other god *instead of Jehovah*. Nothing must usurp the place of God in our hearts and affections. Riches, learning, and power are gifts from—and must not be worshipped instead of—God. There is a tendency in man to imagine and make other gods. The Jews were prone to fall into the gross enormities of polytheism; classic nations of antiquity, amid all superstitions and devotions, were "without God." In this age—clear with indications of God's existence and unity, with tender and most constraining motives to cleave to Him—there is still a tendency in our hearts to depart from God and make idols of the creatures; still a necessity to urge the claims of Jehovah, and maintain virtue and piety in the world. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 2. No other god *along with Jehovah*. There cannot be two gods. It is impossible to serve *two* masters. If we hate one we shall cleave to the other, or hold to the one and despise the other (Matt. vi. 24). Yet many try to serve God and the world—make a compromise, and, like Israel, join a false god with the true. "They feared the Lord and served their own gods." 3. Jehovah, and *Jehovah only*, must be our God. He must be the object of our choice and affection. We are forbidden to deny God; to give the glory due to Him to another; and to forget our relation to Him as our God. We must know and acknowledge, worship and serve God as one God, as the only true God, and as our God.

II. The grounds on which God claims to be the sole object of our affection. The law begins with a declaration of God concerning Himself, which serves as a ground and motive for obedience. "I am Jehovah thy God." These words are often repeated, because the tendencies of our nature to forget or slight God's manifestations are deep and dangerous. 1. *God's supreme authority*. "I am Jehovah." Self-existent, infinite, and eternal, the source of life, authority and happiness. Our maker, and has right to dispose of us according to his pleasure. 2. *God's covenant mercy*. "Thy God." The name Jehovah might terrify, but "thy God" is the charter in Christ of all blessings, allures and draws us to him. "Happy are the people whose God is the Lord." 3. *God's wonderful deliverance*. "Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," etc. This was an act of power, wisdom and goodness, specially fitted to incite them to obedience, and kindle their hearts into warmest love. God delivers that he may be served. When he has made and redeemed us surely no other god should hide him from view. "Therefore will we serve the Lord, for he is our God."

### THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: GOD'S SUPREMACY OVER OUR WORSHIP.

#### Verses 8-10.

"The first commandment regards the *object* of worship—the living and true God, and requires that we worship Him, and no other. The second respects the *means* of worship, and requires that we worship the true God in such a way only, and by such ordinances as He hath appointed in His word. The first may be discovered by the light of nature, but the second can be discovered only by revelation." (*Patterson*). In one command God declares that He will be worshipped by His intelligent creatures, and in the other He prescribes the method of solemnizing His worship."

I. The spirituality of the Divine nature requires spirituality of Divine worship. God in contrast to all false deities, is a spirit—must be worshipped in spirit and in truth—cannot be, and must not be represented in visible shape.

There is no resemblance to Him in anything He has made. Whatever men plead in favour of sense aiding faith, God says "thou shalt not." 1. We are not *to make* nor fancy any material image of God in heaven above or on earth beneath, or in the waters beneath the earth. 2. We are not *to worship* any picture or painting of God. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them." We long to set the object of our affection before our eyes—feel it difficult to fix our mind upon an unseen God; but we must trust to no image. The Holy Spirit can help our infirmities, and give spirituality of mind and fervour of devotion. Religious worship is an act of thought, principles, and affections—not attitude, genuflections, and outward rites. It must be in spirit and in truth—not in crucifix, bodily form, and graven image. "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?"

II. Spirituality of Divine Worship is enforced by special sanctions. To enforce this second (and the first) commandment, certain penalties are threatened and certain mercies promised. 1. *God's righteous displeasure forbids any other worship.* "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." He is zealous for His honour (Is. xlii. 8; xlviii. 11), cannot brook a rival, nor receive a partial or divided homage. 2. *God's wonderful providence will punish any other worship.* One great error of idolatrous systems—and congenial to every sinner—is to suppose that because God is invisible, He does not notice human conduct. But these words show that His government is universal, extending to individual agents and particular actions. The inspection or administration of God is presented in two aspects—(1) *A threatening aspect* to those that hate Him. Sin and its punishment are transmitted. Idolatry and its evil consequences descend from father to son, and God punishes the sins of the parents in the children to the third and fourth generation. This truth appeals to the strongest instincts of our nature, guards the purity of religion, by enlisting the affection of a parent for his offspring and grafting on that affection salutary fear of Divine visitations. (2) *A merciful aspect* to those that love Him. The world is not governed by blind fate. There is no irresistible necessity in the continuous results of evil. A merciful God restrains the sinner, checks the evil, and forgives all who are brought back to Him in penitence, prayer, and love, "The same principle of involving the children with the fathers is followed; but, mark the difference in the extent of its application! The visitation of anger was to reach the third or the fourth generation; the display of mercy was to continue throughout *thousands* of generations!" "Thou showest loving kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them" (Jer. xxxii. 18).

"A Deity believed, will nought avail;  
Rewards and punishments make God adored;  
And hopes and fears give conscience all her power."—*Young*.

#### DIVINE VISITATIONS.—*Verses 9, 10.*

It was needful for the sake of the Jews themselves, and for the honour of the true God, that His presence and providence with His people and with other nations should be sensibly realised and enforced by rewards and punishments—that these rewards and punishments should be *so* distributed as to evince His special interference. We are often more educated by the eye than by the ear. Since we are incapable of lofty abstractions, and insensible to remote consequences of deeds, God seeks by special manifestations to impress our minds and aid us in our duty. Hence the declaration of His government, and the principles on which it is conducted.

**I.** The government of God is active. He is "*visiting*." He is neither dead nor asleep as heathen gods. Nor has He left the world to the government of chance or abstract law. God may seem to be inactive and uninterested in our concerns, but He is ever watchful. Mr. Lloyd Garrison, addressing a meeting on one occasion on behalf of negro emancipation, was almost despairing, and cast a gloom upon the audience. Up jumped an old negress, and in a voice of thunder shouted, "Mr. Garrison, is God dead? will he not visit His people?" This was like an electric shock, imparting new life and new hopes. From that day the cause assumed a brighter aspect.

**II.** The government of God is just. "*Visiting the sins*." Men may wink at sin, but God does not. Sentence against evil is not executed speedily; men may be too confident and resolved, their hearts may be *fully set* (the whole energy directed) upon evil (Ecc. viii. 11), but God's patience is not forgetfulness. He is just, and punishment will come. "It comes with feet of wool, but it will strike with hands of lead," says Bp. Reynolds.

**III.** The government of God is merciful. Shewing *mercy* unto thousands. Merciful and benevolent in its general nature and in its results. Punishment is needful, always just and rightly administered in God's moral government. The *threatening* is merciful, intended to prevent sin. Anger is shown to a few, but mercy to thousands. "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands," etc. (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7).

**IV.** The government of God is universal. It extends to all places—to all individuals. "Them that hate me" and "them that love me;" to all generations, not only to "the third and fourth" but to the end of the world. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Hear, O Israel*. 1. God *speaks* to the people. 2. The people are commanded to *hear* what God utters. 3. To *learn* what they hear. 4. To *keep* when they know the laws. "The difference between Divinity and other sciences, is, that it is not enough to learn, but we must keep and do it; as lessons of music must be practised, and a copy not read only, but acted.—*Trapp*."

Ver. 5. *I stood between*. Moses Mediator. 1. Desired by the people who felt their guilt and distance from God. 2. Provided by God (Ex. xix. 2). 3. Typical of Christ.

Ver. 6. *God set forth*. 1. In essential greatness, "I am the Lord," *i.e.* Jehovah. 2. In covenant mercy. "Thy God." 3. In wonderful providence. Brought from Egypt, the house of bondage. "God's right to give laws

to the Hebrew nation is not founded upon His being the one only God, but upon his having, by miraculous interpositions and works of power, laid the foundations of their state—not upon His character and claims as the Creator of heaven and earth, but upon His peculiar relation to them as their national founder and protector; and hence by the unparalleled services which he had rendered to the Israelites, He had acquired all the title to their willing and grateful obedience that a benefactor could have."—*Jamieson, Dr.*

*The Lord thy God*. 1. *God's sovereignty over us*. He is our Lord—we are His property and subjects. He has absolute right to prescribe, and absolute power to dispose. 2. *God's propriety in us*. "Thy God" in redemption and covenant mercy chiefly, for all have forfeited His favour and love.



Vers. 6, 7. This may well lead the van and be set in the front of all the commandments, because it is the foundation of all true religion. The sum of this commandment is that we should sanctify God in our hearts, and give Him precedence above all created beings. There are two branches—1. That we must have one God. 2. That we must have but one; or thus—1. That we must have God for our God. 2. That we must have no other.—*Watson.*

Vers. 8–10. *Image worship.* 1. *Impossible.* God cannot be represented. He is spiritual and invisible. 2. *Irrational.* For the workmen is better than the work. Absurd to bow

to the work of men's hands. 3. *Unscriptural.* Against the command of God (Lev. xxvi. 1; Deut. xvi. 22).

Vers. 9, 10. *Family religion.* 1. Parents should consider well before they act; lest they (1) expose themselves, and (2) ruin their children by their wickedness. 2. Children are not excused through bad examples of parents—should imitate their parents in right only, and be thankful if they have been trained up to love and obey God. How careful should we be to set good examples, to maintain the worship of God in the family, and to live that we may rightly influence future generations.

### THE THIRD COMMANDMENT: GOD'S SUPREMACY OVER OUR LIPS.

#### Verse 11.

God is absolute and cannot be seen in His Divine essence, yet He reveals His glory in His name. Since he cannot be known by similitudes, He manifests Himself in His works and word—in the government of the world and the life and death of His Son. God connects His name, therefore, with the solemnities and transactions of Divine truth. This name must not be abused, but its majesty must impress our minds and guard our lips.

**I. It is our duty to revere the Divine Name.** “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Our tongues must not be claimed as our own (Ps. xii. 3), but devoted to the glory of God. 1. *In religious worship.* In prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, the heart, and not the lips merely, must be engaged. Our vows must not be made in times of sickness and peril, and forgotten in health and deliverance. Our worship must not be hypocritical, superficial, and insincere; nor our service formal and cold. Our profession must not be in words, but in deeds. If we “swear to the Lord of Hosts,” we must serve Him “with reverence and godly fear.” 2. *In ordinary conversation.* We profane the Holy Name by its use in light, flippant conversation—in jesting and idle talk. In private intercourse, in the market place, and in courts of law, we must give no force to falsehood. All language garnished with oaths and irreverent use of the Divine name is a violation of this commandment—“Hallowed be thy name.”

**II. The irreverent use of the Divine name will be punished.** “The Lord will not hold him guiltless.” Many excuse themselves from habit and custom; others justify themselves in profaning God's name when they are crossed, disappointed, and carried along by passion. Such are not innocent, but guilty; and though they may escape public rebuke from friends, and punishment from human laws, yet the Lord Himself will execute the law. “He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death.”

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: GOD'S CLAIM UPON OUR TIME.

## Verses 12-15.

"There is a close connection between the commandments of this first table. The *first* commandment is intended to regulate our views and feelings, in relation to the *object* of our supreme homage; the *second* has respect to the *medium* through which that homage is expressed; the *third* regards the *spirit* which is to accompany us in all the solemnities of truth and of religion; and the *fourth*, the appropriation of a portion of our *time* to His service—thus to indicate our subjection to His government, and our willingness to be entirely consecrated to His glory" (*Stowel*). In these words we have an acquaintance with the Sabbath presupposed. It must have been known, and perhaps observed in some respect. Hence the injunction—"remember." The Sabbath was then instituted, and its obligations made known before the giving of the Law at Sinai. Now the command is given to "keep" and "sanctify" it. Notice the observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest.

**I. All classes are under obligation to keep the Sabbath.** 1. *Individuals* must observe the day. "*Thou shalt.*" It is binding upon every one as subjects of God's government. Religion—for the permanent interests of which the Sabbath was made—is a matter of personal conviction, experience, responsibility, and practice. 2. *Heads of families* must observe the day. "Nor thy son, nor thy daughter." Parents must habitually regard its sanctity and encourage the performance of its duties in the arrangements and discipline of the family. Thus only can the order and welfare of domestic religion be maintained. 3. *Masters* must observe the day. "Nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant." Rest was to extend to domestics who specially required it, in performing the heavy duties of the household. God also "careth for cattle." Dumb animals as well as human beings were embraced in that mercy which is "over all His works."

**II. The method of keeping the Sabbath.** Two ways are pointed out. 1. It must be kept *as a day of rest*. Work was laid aside for man and beast. All kinds of business in the field and in the market must cease. "Thou shalt not do any work." Physically and morally we require rest. If God saw fit to rest, how much greater need have we to cease from labour. Abolish the Sabbath and human life would be shortened by weary, wasting toil. In 1793 France invented *decades*, and made every tenth day a sabbath, but found out her mistake and returned to the appointed day. We must cease from worldly employments and servile work. "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord." 2. It must be kept *as a day of worship*. As God blessed the day and hallowed it, filling it with peace and good to all; so we must "keep the Sabbath day to *sanctify it*." Work must be laid aside for worship. The time is set apart for public and private worship. We must neither forget nor carelessly perform the duties required; nor must we profane the day by idleness, unlawful works, or unnecessary recreation. God dignifies human labour, condemns avarice and excessive toil, and teaches us to look upon work not as aimless, incessant, unprofitable, but as pointing to a rest, a fruition which is typical of that eternal Sabbath which "remaineth for the people of God" Heb. iv. 9.

**III. The Inducements to keep the Sabbath.** Many reasons are given for its observance. 1. It is *reasonable* to keep it. God has given us six days for work,

and only claims one for Himself. It might have been the reverse. Is it not, therefore, unreasonable—ungrateful to grudge a seventh part of our time to the worship and service of God! 2. It is *right* to keep it. God has special claims and propriety in this part of our time. God is in covenant relation, condescends to hold communion with us on that day. Hence it is a great privilege to observe, and an awful robbery to desecrate that day. “The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.” 3. God *commands* us to keep it. “God hath commanded thee.” As the law of God, it is authoritative and ultimate—not mere counsel and advice, not a naked rule, a bare prescription of what is right. It *demand*s obedience, and its demands are accompanied with just and awful sanctions. 4. *God’s goodness* urges to keep it. Israel were reminded of their servitude in Egypt, of deliverance from it, and of introduction into rest. Therefore their hearts should be warmed to gratitude, and they should be prompted to observe that day which reminds them of the goodness of God (ver. 15). Special displays of Divine mercy, relief from oppression and despair, should lead us on every return of the day of rest to remember our escape and praise our Redeemer.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 11. 1. *What required* in this commandment: a reverent use of God’s attributes and titles, ordinances, and word. 2. *What forbidden*: all profaning or abuse of everything by which God makes Himself known to us. 3. *What reason* annexed to enforce observance. “The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.” “The caution that a breach of this commandment incurs guilt in the eyes of Jehovah is especially appropriate, in consequence of the ease with which the temptation to take God’s name in vain besets men in their common intercourse with each other” (*Speak. Com.*). Learn—1. The necessity of having becoming views of God. 2. The obligation always to fear Him, and to guard against offending Him by perjury, profanity and blasphemy.

Vers. 12–14. How God esteemeth the strict observance of the Sabbath may appear by the exact delivery of it. For He hath fenced it about like Mount Sinai, with marks and bounds, that profaneness might not approach it. (1) By His watchword, “Remember.” (2) By His bounty, “Six days,” etc. (3) By His sovereignty, “It is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” (4) By His latitude. “Thou, nor thy son,” etc. (5) By His own example, “And He res-

ted the seventh day.” (6) By His benediction, “He blessed it,” and ordained it to be a means of much blessing to those that observe it (*Trapp*). *The sabbath adapted to the necessities of man*. 1. By affording rest from toil; hence promoting health and enjoyment. 2. By giving opportunity for family intercourse and instruction. 3. By securing due observance of public worship. Hence in His individual, social, and religious condition the Sabbath promotes the welfare of man. Chief Justice Hale observed that according to his care in observing the Lord’s day, he commonly prospered in his undertakings the week following—“Blessed is the man. . . . that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it” (Is. lvi. 2).

Ver. 15. *Remember Egypt*. We are prone to remember the palaces and pleasures of Egypt; God admonishes us to remember its *slavery*. The memory of our former state should be—  
I. An antidote to discontent. Though the labours and trials of the wilderness were many, yet in Egypt we had more. If we labour, it is not to make bricks without straw—not for another, but for our own profit. II. A stimulant to zeal. Remembering Egypt, let us press on toward Canaan; give no advantage to our enemies. III. A reason for obedience. He who graciously delivered



us has right to our service. If we made bricks for Pharaoh, "what shall we render unto the Lord?" If *fear* produced activity, how much more should *love*! IV. Wings for faith and hope. Remember that *that* God who could deliver from Egypt can bring to Canaan.

He who has begun the work will complete it. V. A call to humility. I was but a servant, a *slave*: I owe all to my Deliverer. Without Him I were a slave again. "By grace I am what I am."—(*From Bib. Museum.*)

## THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: HONOUR TO PARENTS, OR THE RELIGION OF HOME.

### Verse 16.

The present division of the commandments may trench upon symmetrical arrangement, but practically that in which the fifth commandment begins, the second table is convenient and important. The four we have considered comprise our duties towards God, the six which remain, our duties towards man in natural order of relationship. If God is to be acknowledged, worshipped in spirit and held in reverence; if the sabbath is to be devoutly kept; it is needful to imbue the mind, and regulate the conduct with remembrance of these truths. This is the highest of parental duties. Children should be taught from earliest days not merely to love, fear and obey, but to *honour* their parents.

**I. Honour is due to parents from children.** "Honour thy father and thy mother." Customs of society distinguish the separate claims of father and mother, but here they are represented as sustaining towards their children one undivided, honourable claim. 1. *Honour is due to Parents on account of relationship to their children.* Next to relation to God is that of parents to children. There is a beautiful resemblance of one to the other. In the care and interest, the tenderness and authority of a father, we have a faint image of the superintendence, compassion, and government of God. Children should honour their parents because they are related to them. (a) As authors of their being. (b) As their support and comfort. (c) As their educators and protectors. 2. *Honour is due to Parents on account of affection for their children.* Parents often love their children as themselves, hence terms of endearment concerning them, "olive branches," "sunbeams," "jewels," and all that is delightful and beautiful. They impoverish themselves to enrich them. They are not like the raven, or ostrich which are cruel to their young. (Job. xxxix. 14). What a debt of gratitude and honour do children owe to parents! Yet how few try to pay it. Philip the son of Charles V., Emperor of Germany, became master of a new world and of the richest and most extensive dominions in Europe by his father's voluntary resignation, but was so ungrateful that he kept his generous parent waiting a long time for the payment of a small pension. Milton was dependent on his family on account of infirmities; yet his two elder daughters seem to have been destitute of affection and pity. Hooker often prayed that he might never give sorrow to his mother, and used to say that he loved her so dearly, that he would try to be good as much for her sake, as for his own.

**II. The inducements which children have to honour their parents.** This is said to be "the first commandment *with promise* (Ep. vi. 2)." The promise may be applied to the Jews, and to all who keep the commandment, and thus we trace the confirmation of the word, in the providence of God? 1. *It is pleasing to God.* (Col. iii. 20). It is joyful to parents themselves, and acceptable to God. "This is *right*," a duty grounded on the simple, natural and unchanging principles of equity. 2. *It has a tendency to lengthen human*

life. "That thy days may be prolonged." Long life was considered a blessing (Ps. xci. 16 ; cxxviii. 6), but many children find a grave in the cradle, or die in the flower of their age. "The observers of this commandment have a *promise* of long life and prosperity ; whereas those who neglect the duties of it, have no promise of these things at all. To the former, long life comes in virtue of a promise which is infallible, so far as it shall serve God's glory and their good ; but to the latter it does not come in virtue of any promise at all, for such have no interest in the promise ; on the contrary they are under the curse of God ; for it is written, ' cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them ' " (*Paterson*). 3. *It guarantees the well being of life.* "That it may go well with thee." Long life without the blessings and comforts of life is not desirable. Life is only a blessing, when we retain health and reason, and grow in grace and usefulness, as we grow in age. "Observe and hear all these words that it may go well with thee and thy children after thee for ever." 4. *It pledges national existence.* Life and its enjoyments, possession of Canaan, and national permanence depended upon filial respect. Jewish, Roman and other histories, bear witness to this truth. The words set forth a universal principle of national life and existence. "Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts . . . therefore saith the Lord of Hosts, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever." (Jer. xxxv. 18, 19).

#### THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT: OR THE RELIGION OF TEMPER.—*Verse 17.*

The next three commandments determine our duties towards our neighbour, and secure life, marriage and property. In Lev. xix. 18 they are summed up in one word, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Not only is murder condemned, but all our passions from which murder originates. Hence we may term this command the religion of temper.

**I. What this commandment forbids.** Mere killing is not prohibited, for that was lawful sometimes, but every act of violence which inflicts personal injury and endangers human life. "The omission of the object, still remains to be noticed, as showing that the prohibition includes not only the killing of a fellow-man, but the destruction of one's own life or suicide." (*Keil*). 1. *Violent deeds are forbidden.* *Suicide*, or taking away our own life. Ancient systems, taught as a lofty sentiment of morality, that a man might withdraw from life when he found it expedient. Modern verdicts and modern customs of assigning insanity as the cause of this crime lead us to regard it with pity and not detestation. We must look at the act in its real nature, in the law which prohibits it, and the dreadful consequences by which it is enforced. "Do thyself no harm." *Duelling* is a vestige of feudal barbarism. It constitutes the person who thinks himself injured the judge, witness, and avenger of his own wrongs. The grounds of its defence, are irrational, and subversive of all law, justice, and humanity. The duellist makes a law for himself, exalts it above the institutions of his country, and the laws of God. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty : And he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." *Murder* is forbidden. Every man is our brother. We are bound to love him, and promote his welfare. To murder is to hate him, to inflict the greatest misery on him for ever. In the gospel a sacred dignity is attached to man. He is made in "the image of God," and associated with the nature of God. Hence, infinite majesty is insulted, infinite goodness abused, and divine authority trampled on. "For in the image of God, made he man." (Gen. ix. 6). 2. *Violent passions are forbidden.* As explained and fulfilled by

Jesus Christ, this commandment embraces a class of most powerful human affections and desires. It is enforced by all the facts and principles of the gospel. *Anger* is a species of murder, and when roused to excess, will produce outrages most shameful. "In their anger they slew a man." Causeless anger, scornful contempt, and passionate reviling are three breaches of this command. (Matt. v. 21, 22). *Hatred* often leads to excess in language and actions. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." (John, iii. 15). A *scornful spirit* must not be indulged. To scorn is to despise, vilify and revile. *Revenge* must not be cherished. He who is proud of his own importance, careless of the rights of justice, and sacrifices the peace, character and life of the offender to the indulgence of passion breaks this law. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt not *avenge*, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people." (Lev. xix. 17, 18).

"What will not ambition and revenge descend to."—*Milton*.

**II. What this commandment enjoins.** It teaches the very opposite feelings of envy, hatred, and revenge. 1. *It enjoins feelings of humanity.* We must not envy nor grieve at the prosperity of another—not quarrel, nor rail, nor plot against another. We must exercise mercy, not cruelty. We must be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving towards our fellow creatures, and put away "all bitterness and wrath." 2. *It enjoins the use of all lawful efforts to preserve life.* Whatever tends to destroy our natural life is expressly forbidden. We must avoid all intemperance, gluttony, and drunkenness. We must not be indifferent to our own wants, nor neglect the wants of others. Every effort must be made to feed, clothe, and preserve the body, to avoid immoderate labour and indulgence, and to keep the life of another. Destroy not your own souls by false confidence, pernicious sentiments, and neglect of "the great salvation." Destroy not the souls of others by neglect in preventing them from sin, in abandoning the religious interests of family, society, and neighbourhood, and by withholding your effort and influence to save men. Oh, avoid the guilt of spiritual murder!

*Murder forbidden.* Observe, this commandment is—I. Universal in application; to each person is said, "Thou shalt not kill." There is no exception to this rule. II. Emphatic in its wording; "shalt not." Note the brevity of the whole commandment by which additional force is given to it. Brevity is not only the source of wit, but of wisdom also. III. Concerning the greatest of crimes. The awful nature of murder is sufficiently shown by—1. The abhorrence in which it is held, both by God and man. 2. The terrible reproaches of conscience with which the murderer is tormented.—*J. S. Clarke*.

"O horror! horror! horror! Tongue, nor heart  
Cannot conceive nor name thee."—*Shakespeare*.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16. *Reverence due to parents.* Honour your parents, *i.e.*, 1. Obey them; 2. Respect them; 3. Treat their opinions with regard; 4. Treat their habits with respect. They may be different from ours; may be antiquated, and to us strange, odd, whimsical; but they are the habits of a *parent*, and are not to be ridiculed. 5. provide for them when sick, weary, old, and infirm.—*Barnes*.

*Prolonged.* A good child lengtheneth his father's days; therefore God promiseteth to lengthen his. Ill children, as they bring their parents' "gray hairs with sorrow to the grave," so they are many times cut off in the midst of their days, as Abimelech was: God rendering upon him the evil that he did to his father (Judges ix 56). Besides the punishment they have in their posterity, to whom they have been



*peremptores potius quam parentes.—Trapp.*

*We have a command—*“Honour thy father and thy mother.” The political fathers or magistrates (Job. xxix. 16); seniors, venerable with age (Lev. xix. 32); spiritual fathers (1 Cor. iv. 15); domestic fathers, fathers of households (2 Kings v. 13); natural fathers, fathers of the flesh (Heb. xii. 9). *How children are to obey this command.* 1. By a reverential esteem of their persons. (a) *Inwardly*, by fear mixed with love (Lev. xix. 3). (b) *Outwardly*, in word and gesture. 2. By careful obedience. (a) In hearkening to their council (Prov. i. 8). (b) In complying with their commands (Jer. xxxv. 6; Col. iii. 20). 3. By relieving their wants (Gen. xlvii. 12). *The reasons why children should honour their parents.*

1. It is the solemn command of God. 2. It is well pleasing to the Lord (Col. iii. 20). 3. Parents deserve honour on account of their great love and affection for their children.—*Watson.*

Ver. 17. 1. The value of human life. Philosophy, science, and superstition dignify not human nature. Only where the Gospel is known is life appreciated, preserved, and consecrated to right ends. 2. The guilt of taking away human life. It may be taken away by violence, excess, or neglect. If a beast killed a man, it was stoned; what punishment, then, shall fall upon the murderer when God comes to “make inquisition for blood” (Ps. ix. 12).

#### THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE.—*Verse 18.*

“Nature,” says Grindon, “is a system of nuptials.” Human love is the highest form of love. When true lovers meet, God hath joined them together. Marriage is a symbol of the union between Christ and His Church; intended to be an honourable and abiding institution, and must not be violated by unfaithfulness and adultery. “Let not man put asunder.”

**I. The sanctity of marriage must be duly regarded.** *Adultery* was prevalent in Eastern countries, where heat and idleness seem to nourish sinful lusts almost beyond control. It is the most awful perversion of God’s institution, and the strongest language ever used in Scripture depicts its accursed nature. In the light of the New Testament we read this law in broader spirit than mere letter indicates, and that domestic bonds may be destroyed and the household invaded in different ways. “The desertion of a husband or of a wife; the neglect of conjugal duties, so minutely specified and so persuasively urged in various parts of the New Testament; divorce for any reason but the ascertained perpetration of the crime denounced in this prohibition; the degradation of the marriage contract, by subordinating it to schemes of avarice, ambition, or sensuality—each of these is a gross violation of the seventh commandment,” says Stowel. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”

**II. To secure due regard for marriage sanctity, personal chastity must be cultivated.** This sin and the whole class of passions and gratifications of which it is a part, are offences against purity—the purity of God, of ourselves, and of those affected by our example. Cultivate—1. *Chastity in thought.* Thoughts are dangerous and only require opportunity to break forth into open wickedness. “Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. v. 28). 2. *Chastity in conversation.* Words as well as acts may violate the spirit of this commandment (Matt. xii. 37). Let no corrupt, worthless through putridity, communication proceed out of your

mouth" (Eph. iv. 29). 3. *Chastity in actions.* Fornication, polygamy, and all unnatural pollutions—immodest behaviour and unchaste looks and dress must be abandoned. "Fornication and uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. v. 3).

### THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: THE RIGHTS OF PROPERTY.—Verse 19.

Man is endowed with a principle which impels him to the acquisition of wealth. The proper exercise of this principle leads to gradations of social rank, and lays the foundation for the institutions and laws by which property is preserved and transmitted. But since man is sinful and selfish, it is necessary to embody this law in the legislation of the community.

**I. How this commandment may be violated.** The highwayman who steals his neighbour's purse; the domestic who takes his master's cash, and the apprentice who steals his drugs; the tradesman who makes "the ephah small" (Amos viii. 5), and weighs with "the balances of deceit" (Hos. xii. 7), who seeks to overreach or defraud; the dishonest partner; the fraudulent bankrupt; the traducer of character; the borrower and receiver of stolen goods—all violate this law. Spiritually, a man robs God by taking away the Sabbath, withholding what is due from him to support and propagate the gospel, by neglecting his own soul, and foolishly wasting life, with its calls and opportunities. "Will a man rob God?"

**II. How to guard against the violation of this commandment.** To obey the law and preserve the healthy exercise of a principle which becomes sinful by excessive indulgence we should 1. *Be diligent in a lawful calling.* In the avocations of life we have the happiness of individuals combined with the interests of society—a sphere in which our powers have no need to be lavished on trifles nor perverted by sinful pursuits. Employment for our own support and that of our family is needful. We are urged not to be idle, careless, and slothful—not to engage in gambling, nor to cherish a covetous, grasping disposition, but to be "diligent in business" and "abide in our calling." "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may give to him that needeth" (Eph. iv. 28). 2. *Be content with your lot in life.* It is the arrangement of God and not the work of chance. With all our shifting and tricks, our avarice and plots, we cannot alter things. "Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all: and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." Our individual histories and efforts subserve to the plans of God as much as the fall of states and the motion of stars. Rich and poor are exhorted to trust in God and acquiesce in His providence. "Be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. xiii. 5). 3. *Moderate your views, expectations, and desires.* A sober estimate of our wants and means of gratification is required. Vigorous restraint must be put upon the tendency to over estimate our own claims, and the indulgence of romantic hopes which are often fascinating and ruinous. Fret not nor vex yourselves for the wealth and property of another. "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT : THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.—*Verse 20.*

We have been considering the law of the family, the law of social right, the law of social purity, and the law of honesty ; now we notice the law of truth. We are to regard our neighbour's reputation, and not injure his character. Our great poet says—

“ Who steals my purse steals trash ;  
But he who filches from me my good name,  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
Yet leaves me poor indeed ! ”

**I. What is forbidden in this commandment.** False witness may be given in various ways ; but in everything we must put away lying and speak truth with our neighbour (Eph. iv. 25). 1. *In courts of law* false witness was especially condemned. The *prosecutor* is forbidden to make unjust demand, to lay false charges, and to suborn false witnesses ; the *defender* to deny a just charge, and to make artful evasions ; the *witnesses* must not deny or keep back any part of truth ; the *advocate* must not defend what is wrong, nor the *judge* pervert justice and condemn the innocent. We must freely, sincerely speak the truth, and nothing but the truth. “ A faithful witness will not lie ; but a false witness will utter lies ” (Prov. xiv. 5). (*Cf.* Deut. xix. 18, 19 ; Jer. iv. 2 ; Zech. viii. 17). 2. *In daily life* false witness is forbidden. Backbiting, evil construing, and malicious accusation must not be indulged. Nor must we be guilty of idle gossip, tale-bearing, and raising, receiving, and spreading scandal or false report. “ To credit common report is in itself a species of calumny,” says one. “ A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips ; and a liar giveth an ear to a naughty tongue ” (Prov. xvii. 4). Give no currency to scandal, nor join those mischievously employed, crying out “ Report, and we will report ” (Jer. xx. 10). “ How many thousand souls are hurt every day by the words of others,” says Baxter. “ Thou shalt not *raise* (credit, take up, bear) a *false* (empty, untruthful) report ; put not thine hand with the wicked (render him no help) to be an unrighteous witness ” (Ex. xxiii. 1). (*cf.* Lev. xix. 16 ; Ex. xxiii. 7 ; Ps. ci. 5 ; Prov. xix. 9.)

“ Whoever keeps an open ear  
For tattlers, will be sure to hear  
The trumpet of contention :  
Aspersions is the babblers trade ;  
To listen is to lend him aid,  
And rush into dissension.—*Cowper.* ”

**II. What is enjoined in this commandment.** It enjoins truth and simplicity in our intercourse one with another, an agreement between the heart and the lips. 1. *Truthfulness in speech.* Lying is offensive to God and unfits for society. How can you converse or bargain with a man when you cannot trust his word ? “ Therefore put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour ; for we are members one of another. ” (Ep. iv. 25). 2. *Regard for our neighbour's good name.* Invest him with the character of a friend, charitably cover his infirmities, betray not his secrets, readily acknowledge his gifts, and receive good report concerning him. Defend his reputation when unjustly attacked, envy not his success nor take pleasure in his disgrace. “ Speak evil of no man. ” (Titus iii. 2). 3. *Love to others as to ourselves.* We should be pleased with the good of another, as well as with our own good. Never keep an account of the misdeeds of another, with a view to sum up and charge against him when occasion serves. Abound in that charity which “ doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, *thinketh*, (imputeth) no evil. ” (1 Cor. xiii. 5). Our neighbour lives near us, comes under



our notice, and lies more or less at our mercy. His claims are therefore enhanced by *nearness*, by intimate acquaintance with him, and by all local and relative obligations that bind us together. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—

"Who that dares  
His brother's name, his brother's cause malign,  
The very law maligns, spurns its restraints,  
And umpire sits, where he himself should bow."

### THE TENTH COMMANDMENT: UNLAWFUL DESIRE.—*Verse 21.*

"As the sixth, seventh, and eighth Commandments forbid us to injure our neighbour in deed, the ninth forbids us to injure him in word, and the tenth in thought. No human eye can see the coveting heart; it is witnessed only by him who possesses it, and by Him to whom all things are naked and open. But it is the root of all sins against our neighbour in word or in deed. (Jas. i. 14, 15). The man who is acceptable before God, walking uprightly, not backbiting with his tongue, nor doing evil to his neighbour, is he who "speaketh the truth in his heart." (Ps. xv. 2, 3).—*Sp. Com.*

**I. The way in which this commandment is violated.** By that discontentedness with our lot in life which leads us to fret, repine and rebel against God's providence. "Neither murmur ye as some of them murmured." (1 Cor. x. 10). By envying or grieving at our neighbour's good. "Grudge not one against another (Jas. v. 9). By indulging unlawful desires for things which belong to our neighbour. Excessive longing after another's wealth and possessions is branded by this Commandment as sin. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness."

**II. The spirit which leads to the violation of this commandment.** "Thou shalt not covet." The words indicate the intense spirituality and holiness of the law. St. James (i. 15) looks upon sin as an outward act. St. Paul looks upon it in its source and earliest stages. The province of human law is the deed, that of divine law the heart, the thoughts from which spring the actions. The thought and desire may lead to execution of evil. Evil concupiscence is the root of all sin, especially of offences which men commit against their fellowmen (Matt. xv. 19; Mark vii. 21). Eve and Achan "saw, coveted, and took." Covetousness instigated Judas to betray the Saviour, and induced Ananias and Sapphira to "tempt the Holy Ghost." "I had not known sin (clearly and fully as an indwelling and virulent principle), but by the law; for I had not known lust (irregular and ungoverned desire), except the (Mosaic) law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. vii. 7).

**III. The method of correcting this spirit.** Hippocrates advised a consultation of all the physicians in the world for the cure of covetousness. What they could not discover the Bible prescribes. 1. *Form a right estimate of worldly good.* We covet what never satisfies. "Solomon had put all the creatures in a retort," says quaint Watson, "and distilled out their essence, and behold 'all was vanity'" (Ecc. ii. 11). 2. *Be satisfied with present possessions.* Why ungrateful because we have not more and others less. The more we have the greater will be our account at the last day. Let us believe that condition best which God has given to us. Contentment, says Socrates, is "the wealth of nature." "I have enough," cried Jacob (Gen. xxxiii. 11). "I have learned, in whatsoever

state I am, therewith to be *content* (i.e., sufficient in one's self, self-contained, opposed to outward blessings). (Phil. iv. 11-13.) 3. *Pray for Divine grace to help.* This alone can subdue lust. Cherish faith in God who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies. Faith is the remedy for care and covetousness. It overcomes the world, purifies the heart, and makes God our portion (Ps. xvi. 5). Ask the Holy Spirit to make you heavenly minded, and fix your thoughts on Christ and things above. "Covet earnestly the best gifts."

The closing commandment is of great importance in two distinct points of view, *first*, as exhibiting the spirit of all the previous commandments, and *secondly*, as laying the foundation for just and consistent views of all the doctrines of the Gospel. It exhibits *the spirit of the divine law*, as extending to the *desires* of the heart; the subtlest movings of the mind, as well as the visible actions of the life. In other commandments, a man may lose sight of the real character of the government under which he is placed, and may imagine that if he secures the confidence of his fellow creatures he is safe. This is the prevailing state of mind of men of every rank. It is thought if we infringe not on the rights of others—seize not their property—nor malignantly traduce their characters—nor wantonly endanger their lives, we are moral. But this commandment brings us under the eye of an omniscient ruler, under the authority of a spiritual government. It teaches us that our thoughts and wishes are minutely inspected. It pursues us to our secrecy—pierces the veil of external appearances, and lays open the foldings of self-delusion. It scrutinizes our very souls, and makes us feel the omnipresence of Deity. It brings the sanctions of *His* law to bear directly on our present consciousness; links the moments of our existence to the last judgment, and pours into the inmost chambers of the spirit the light of a future world. "I had not known sin, except the law had said, 'thou shalt not covet.'" *Secondly.* The importance of this commandment will be felt when we consider it as laying the *foundation for just and consistent views of the doctrines of the gospel*. The sublime truths of the one are from the same God who "spake the words" of the other. It is only by invalidating the authority, or by subduing the lofty tone, of the commandments, that a man can either resist the evidence or pervert the meaning of the gospel. How can a man for instance, consistently deny the total depravity of the human race, without first destroying the uncompromising strictness of the divine law, thundering forth its curses on even an irregular desire? How can a man persuade himself that it is not his *duty* to believe on the name of Jesus Christ for salvation, without first persuading himself that it is not his duty to love God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself, in a word, that nothing is *due* from him to God, and consequently that he is not a subject of moral government of God? The great promise of the gospel to our first parents, was delivered in circumstances illustrative of this sentiment; for the views they had of the sentence passed upon them, made them feel the necessity and value of this promise. How often in the public discourses of Jesus, and in more private dialogues, with various classes surrounding him, do we see his anxiety to produce an *impression* of the sanctity and strictness of the commandments,—evidently for the purpose of silencing the objector and preparing him to "receive the Kingdom of God?" In the same spirit the apostles preached and wrote. A consciousness of guilt will lead you to rely on the perfect obedience of Christ. Here we have not simply, an exhibition of mercy, but of "mercy and truth" meeting together—not merely the triumph of grace, but of "grace reigning *through righteousness*, into eternal life." "God hath set him forth, not only as a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins;" but also, "to declare his righteousness, that he might be *just*, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."—*From Dr. Stowel.*

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 18. The sum of this commandment is the *preservation of bodily purity*. 1. Something tacitly implied; which is that the ordinance of marriage should be observed. (1 Cor. vii. 2; Heb. xiii. 4). 2. Something expressly forbidden; which is infecting ourselves with bodily pollutions.—*Watson*.

Ver. 19. *Dishonesty forbidden*. Observe the simple comprehensiveness of this commandment. 1. Nothing is said about *the value* of the thing stolen. The law is broken whether the thing taken, be a kingdom or a pin. 2. Nothing is said about the *nature* of the thing stolen; it may be property, time, reputation, etc. 3. Nothing is said about *the method* of stealing; whether it be secretly appropriated, or violently wrested from its owner.—*Biblical Museum*.

Ver. 20. In this commandment, three kinds of interests are combined—the interests of truth—of character—and of neighbourhood.—*Stowel*.

Learn—1. The value of a good name. 2. The sacredness of truth.

3. The necessity of guarding our tongue. 4. The danger of false witness. (Deut. xix. 18, 19; Prov. xix. 5).

“Give thoughts no tongue.”—*Shakespeare*.

Ver. 21. The injunction is repeated to call attention and impress the mind. The form here differs from that in (Ex. xx. 17). The order of the words *house* and *wife* is reversed, two different words *desire* and *covet* are used here, and the word *field* is added. The first two variations are explained by the general character of the passage, and it seems natural to mention the “field,” when Moses was speaking with the partition of Canaan in view. Learn—1. The *nature* of covetousness. It denotes a state of mind from which the Supreme good has been lost, labouring to replace Him by some subordinate form of enjoyment. 2. The *origin* of covetousness from within. Desires, lusts etc. 3. The *forms* of covetousness. Worldliness, rapacity, avarice, prodigality, etc. 4. The guilt and evils of covetousness. 5. The doom of the covetous. “The covetousness whom the Lord abhorreth.”

THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S LAW.—*Verses 22–25*.

The delivery of the commandments was accompanied with every display of grandeur, and amid circumstances of terror. Everything was ordered to impress the mind with the glory of God, the rigour of law, and the dread of penalty. This imposing manner and appalling phenomena indicate the majesty of God's law. This majesty is seen in different ways.

I. In the divinity of its origin. “These words the Lord spake.” The voice of God was distinctly heard articulating, and that voice was louder than the loudest peals of thunder. Many ask, “from whence do we get the moral law?” The answer is given here. It came from God—the grandest and highest origin to which anything can aspire! It is elevated above the code of Egypt, Persia and Greece—a standard of life infinitely beyond the invention of man, and to which the holiest have never reached. A distinguished lawyer rather sceptically inclined on this subject undertook to read the Old Testament to satisfy himself concerning the validity of its claims. When he read the Decalogue, lost in admiration he exclaimed, “where did Moses get that law?” Further study removed every sceptical doubt, and produced conviction of its divine origin (*cf.* Pulpit Com. p. 106). “We know that God spake unto Moses.”



**II. In the terrible phenomena which accompanied its delivery.** Such phenomena were varied, most terrific and designed to produce the conviction of the authority and holiness of law. 1. *There was natural agency.* The deepest impressions are made upon the mind through the senses, God who knew what was in man signalized his descent on Sinai, with thunder and lightning, smoke and fire, "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words." What must be the aim and dignity of a law thus given? What should be the regard and obedience we pay to the great Lawgiver Himself? "That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, *the Lord thy God.*" 2. *There was supernatural agency.* The word was spoken "by angels." (Heb. ii. 2). The law was received "by the disposition (ministration) of angels" (Acts vii. 53); "ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." (Gal. iii. 19). The presence of angels is often referred to in the giving of the law, to indicate its solemnity and claims. "He shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints, (myriads of holy ones, *i.e.* angels); from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Deut. xxxiii. 2 (*cf.* Psa. lxxxviii. 17; Heb. iii. 3).

**III. In the design for which it was given.** There was mercy mixed with majesty and the appalling phenomena produced the desired effect. 1. *To test their obedience.* Israel had been surrounded by idolatry, and the ideas of God's majesty and reverence for law had been lost, by deifying objects of sense. The manifestations of Sinai were directly adapted to inspire the soul with reverence for the infinite majesty and eternal power of that Being with whom they had to do—to put their obedience to a fresh proof and give them a more signal opportunity of showing devotedness to His will. "For God is come to prove you." 2. *To keep them from sin.* They learned the guilt of offending a God so terrible in strictness and holiness. They felt that they were weak, frail, and sinful creatures, and were struck with consternation at such awful displays. Moses himself was overpowered with fear (Heb. xii. 21). This was a dispensation of terror, designed to prepare for the gospel. "Therefore knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men." 3. *To show the need of a mediator.* Conscious of guilt, they were greatly alarmed. "This great fire will consume us." They wondered that they remained alive after witnessing such appearances. "For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" They expected to hear more, but could not forbear it, and requested Moses to hear and speak for them, "Go thou near," etc. (ver. 27). Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant.

**IV. In the method in which it is handed down to us.** We may judge of the value and importance of communications by the forms in which they are written. 1. *This law is complete,* "and he added no more" (ver. 22). The great voice spoke no more directly to the people. The scene was not repeated, and the law was complete in itself and distinct from other revelations given through Moses. "The law of the Lord is perfect." 2. *This law is permanent.* "He wrote them in two tables of stone," to preserve them from corruption, and transmit them pure and entire to posterity. Let us thank God for a *written* revelation, which is a natural and human method of conveyance, more complete, uniform, and permanent than any other form. *Vox audita perit, littera scripta manet*, "a word heard perishes, but a written letter remains." Tradition passes away like the morning clouds; the Bible will continue as long as sun and moon endure. "The word of the Lord endureth for ever."

THE USE OF NATURE IN DIVINE INSTRUCTION.—*Verses 23–26.*

Nature and the Bible have the same author, and both are written for the instruction of man. "Thus there are two books from whence I collect my divinity," says Sir Thomas Brown, "besides that written one by God, another of His servant, Nature—that universal and public manuscript that lies expanded unto the eyes of all ; those that never saw Him in the one have discovered Him in the other." God, in the revelation of His will, has often created the scenes and used the elements of nature. This is specially seen in the giving of the Law on Sinai. Hence learn the use of natural phenomena in Divine instruction.

**I. Man is constituted to learn from nature.** His senses are adapted to the external world. "Ye have *heard* His voice—we have *seen* this day." For every organ of sense there seems to be an object in nature. But man's moral nature is affected through the medium of sense. Many talk of "the sensuous minds of the Jewish people," but we are children in this respect. We are frightened at the lightning and the thunder—terror-stricken at floods, fires, and earthquakes. We are roused to a sense of our danger and our guilt by the manifestation of God in His works ; and, like Massillon's audiences in the French Court, dread His terrible judgments. "Let not God speak with us lest we die."

**II. Nature is constituted to teach man.** Nature is God's mind expressed in matter : "a product of His power and wisdom—a mirror in which His attributes are reflected—a volume in which, by legible characters or expressive signs, He maketh Himself known" (*Dr. Jas. Buchanan*). "Natural theology" is only the true insight and real exposition of God's revelation in Nature ; for "in His temple doth everyone speak of (marg., every whit of it uttereth) His glory" (Ps. xxix. 9). But Nature, as well as the Bible, allows special Divine interpositions. Matter is not eternal, nor is abstract law endowed with attributes of deity. We have often direct interpositions which seem—but only seem, perhaps—above natural law. God speaks to us by the elements, forces, and scenes of Nature. He often extorts confession, vows, and prayers by its awful displays, and speaks in tones which lead us to cry for mercy and a mediator. "Let not God speak with us," but "do thou speak with us, and we will hear it and do it."

MOSES CHOSEN MEDIATOR.—*Verses 27, 28 ; 30, 31.*

As all the people stood before the mount, terrified by the vivid flames and the trembling earth, they feared death. The voice of God overpowered them more than anything else, and the heads of the people and elders requested Moses to intercede.

**I. The reason of this mediation.** In this awful display Israel realised their moral condition as unfit for communion with Jehovah. Guilty man has always felt his distance from God, and at every indication of the supernatural cried out with fear. Convinced of sin we feel the necessity of a mediator.

**II. The nature of this mediation.** When the people "stood afar off," conscious of guilt and afraid of God's wrath, "Moses drew near unto the thick darkness," or was made to draw near (Ex. xx. 21), for he durst not venture himself. The Rabbis think that God sent an angel to take him by the hand and lead him up.

1. *He spoke to God for the people.* 2. *He spoke to the people for God.* "Speak

thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee." Moses typified Christ by whom we draw nigh to God without fear and reluctance. By him "we have boldness, courageous outspokenness (Acts iv. 13), and access with confidence." Eph. iii. 12.

**III. The Divine approval of this mediation.** Perhaps they did not know the full import of what they did, but the nomination was well pleasing to God. "They have well said all that they have spoken." Moses is duly appointed, and God speaks to them through his mouth, and they promise to hear and obey. Thus was the covenant made between God and Israel. Moses was honoured as the giver of the law, but Jesus is more highly exalted. "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house."

#### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORDS AND DEEDS.—*Verse 28.*

He expressly mentions having *heard* what they had *said* to Moses. God always hears what we say, not as an unconcerned auditor, but as witness and judge. Solemn thought! The words here were words of religious avowal. "*We will hear and do it.*" God has heard our religious resolutions and engagements. *First* our private ones—that we would watch against such a temper; pray for grace to resist such a temptation; to redeem the time and honour the Lord with our substance. *Secondly*, our more public and solemn ones; when we joined ourselves to His people; went to His table; and over the memorials of His dying love said, "Henceforth by thee only will I make mention of Thy name." *I have heard*, says He, the voice of the words, etc.; and adds with approbation, containing in it complaint, "They have well *said* all they have *spoken*. But talking and doing are two things. Even amongst ourselves, one goes a little way without the other. Actions speak louder than words. What is lip service in religion! Judas gave our Lord the lip—kissed and betrayed Him. Ezekiel's hearers extolled his preaching; brought others to admire him; but their hearts went after their covetousness. Here they spoke well in expressing their readiness to hear and do. But God, who knew them better than they knew themselves, exclaimed, "O that there was such a heart in them."

Speech is one of the most uncertain criterions to judge of character, as to reality or degree of religion. From education, reading, and hearing, persons may learn to talk well—may surpass others far better than themselves: as an empty vessel sounds louder than a full one, and a shallow brook is more noisy than a deep river. Some speak little, concerning themselves especially, for fear of deception, or lest they should appear to be what they are not. Baxter says, in his life of Judge Hale, I feared he was wanting in experimental religion, as he seldom spoke of his own spiritual views and feelings. But upon better acquaintance I found out my mistake. He had heard from many so much hypocrisy and fanaticism that he was urged towards the extreme of silence. It would be better for some to talk less of high confidence and wonderful ecstasies before those weak in faith and comfort, and in danger of being depressed by comparison. To how many individuals will these words apply! The *champion of truth*, has defended its purity and importance—contended earnestly and as far as argument and evidence goes, wisely for the faith. He has well *said* all that he has *spoken*. But where is the spirit of truth? the meekness of wisdom? the mind of Christ? *Another* in the sanctuary has acknowledged in language equally beautiful and true, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, etc. He has well *said* all that he has



*spoken.* But where is the broken heart, the contrite spirit? How often after these confessions is the sermon founded upon them disliked and the preacher condemned! A *third* has gone to his brethren in distress and justified the ways of God to man, but does he justify God's dealings with himself in trouble? He has well *said* all that he has *spoken*; but reminds us of Job's language, "Behold thou hast instructed many and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest: it toucheth thee and thou art troubled." Men mistake themselves though often sincere as they are earnest. They do not distinguish between impulse and disposition, outward excitement and inward principle. Hazael, at the prediction of his cruelties, ignorant of the change that power would produce in him, really execrated the character he became. Peter presuming, but not false, said though all should be offended, yet will not I. The disciples supposed themselves established in faith, beyond the danger of temptation to forsake Him, when they said "Now we believe." But Jesus answered them, "O that there was such a heart in you!"—*From Jay.*

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 23-26. *A Triple Prodigy.*

1. They heard the voice of God speaking with them in distinct language.
2. They saw the fire, the symbol of His presence, the appearance of which demonstrated it to be supernatural.
3. Though God appeared so terrible, yet no person was destroyed, for He came not "to destroy, but to save."—*Wilson.*

*Why should they fear to die?* Since they had seen that day that God doth talk with man, and He liveth? It is answered that they looked upon their present safety as a wonder, but feared what would follow upon such an interview, if continued. It is still the work of the law to serve man, and to drive them to seek for a mediator. If God speaks to us from heaven His stillest rhetoric would be too loud for us.—*Trapp.*

*Terror of law.* 1. Its design. 2. Its results. 3. Its inefficiency to save.

"The law was delivered in this terrible manner, partly to procure reverence for the doctrine of it, and partly to set forth the nature and office of it; which is to terrify and thunder-strike offenders. This fire wherein the law was given is still in it, and will never be out of it." (Deut. xxxiii. 2).—*Trapp.*

Vers. 25-27. 1. The condition of the people, in the state of their mind, and in the locality of their camp, "afar off" in both senses. 2. The necessity of intercourse between God and the people. 3. The medium of intercourse. "A mediator, Moses was not of redemption as Christ that "mediator of the new covenant," and "surety of a better testament (Heb. vii. 22; ix. 15), but of receiving the law, and delivering it to the people, for which end he went up."—*Trapp.*

TRUE RELIGION DESCRIBED.—*Verse 29.*

These words express God's wish for His people, and describe the obedience which He requires from them. The law had produced a penitent feeling, and Israel had made good resolutions under the influence of that feeling. But true religion does not consist in good feelings and good resolves. God wishes for a true heart and constant obedience. "A heart in them to fear Me always." True religion is described—

**I. In its nature.** The fear of God. 1. *Not emotion.* Many are capable of impression and feel deeply sensible of their wants. But frames and feelings change; emotions die away and leave the heart cold and indifferent. Men may be sensitive in their nature, penetrated with the beauty, power and interests of religion, but at the call of duty—the demand for resolute obedience, “they are offended.” 2. *Not resolution.* Israel resolved, and God commended their resolutions, but where was their constancy, their sincerity and heart? Men promise what they forget to perform, and their hearts do not chime in with their lips. 3. But *the fear of God.* Not the spirit of a slave, but of a son. The love which drives out fear and brings us near to God. We must know God not as our Creator and governor, but as our Father. The sense of His presence, authority and love must penetrate the mind, elevate the soul, and temper sacred awe, with filial confidence.

**II. In its centre.** “A heart in them.” The tone, colouring, and direction of the outer life depend upon the condition of the heart—the inner feelings. Our hearts must be renewed and made susceptible of sympathy and love. “A new heart,” “a heart of flesh,” “a clean heart” must be given and fixed on God. “*Such a heart.*” Words and profession, mere knowledge and religious excitement are superficial. The seat of life and conduct is within a man. “For as he thinketh in his heart so is he.”

**III. In its manifestation.** Keeping the commandments. If religion exists it will be seen in its fruits. As light shines forth in beauty, so love in the heart will manifest itself, not in impulse but obedience. “If ye love Me *keep My commandments.*” This keeping must be—1. *Universal.* “*All my commandments.*” We are not to select some, like the Pharisees, rigidly to observe as compensation for the breach of others. All must be kept. This only is acceptable to God. 2. *Constant.* “*Keep all my commandments always.*” In words, actions, and heart. Pledges are made under terror, but God requires expression of steadfast principle, and seeks “patient continuance in well-doing.”

**IV. In its rewards.** There is no merit in our obedience. It is defective and unworthy. In fact we never can perfectly obey even one commandment in ten. But where true conduct springs from a right heart, there will be happiness or well-being. Thus the way of holiness is the way to happiness and God’s favour. 1. *Personal happiness.* “That it might be *well with them.*” 2. *Happiness upon posterity.* “*And with their children.*” 3. *Happiness perpetual.* “*For ever!*” “A perpetuity of bliss alone is bliss.” All this from a right heart! Have we got such a heart in us? We are taught how it may be gained. “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer. xxxii. 40).

#### DIVINE SOLICITUDE.

How lovely does God appear in the concern He here expresses! It is the *language of complaint.* As much as to say, “But I do not find it so.” Is He then disappointed? Not as to fact—for He knows all things—but as to right. Surely, He may expect from us attention to His voice and improvement of advantages with which we are favoured. When He meets with nothing of this, He has reason to complain. This is the meaning when He says, “What more could have been done for My vineyard, and I have not done it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? These three years I came seeking fruit, and finding none.” It is *the expression of desire.* When Scripture ascribes human attributes and feelings to God, they must be understood according to the perfection of His nature. They do not

precisely mean the same in Him as in us. Yet there is always a *truth*, which is the basis of such metaphorical representations. Slavish adherence to systematic divinity has injured some of the finest passages of Revelation; and which were intended to be felt rather than criticised. Do not object, therefore, that "God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever he pleaseth;" and ask "who hath resisted His will?" for this is His own language, "O that there was such a heart in them!" "How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Yes, these are expressions of a God that cannot lie. This affords me encouragement. Unworthy as I am, He does not abandon me. He is willing to save, and waiting to be gracious to me. What is the inability of man to harmonize such declarations with some other parts of their creed, to the oath of the living God. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." It is the *dictate of parental solicitude*. The voice, not of a severe legislator or judge, but of a Father. A Father who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all—who does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men—who says of the refractory child, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" who says of the relenting child, "Is Ephraim My dear Son?" How often does He assume this relation to deprive His greatness of terror, and render it our encouragement and confidence. He pities "as a father pitieth his children," and takes the heart of a mother for the image of tenderness. "As one whom his mother comforteth." "Can a woman forget her child?" She may. Ah! ye mothers, your affection is ice; your heart is iron compared with His!"—"Yet will I not forget thee." Surely "he that loveth not, knoweth not God—for God is love." Can this encourage us to sin? Can we grieve His spirit? Can we bear Him saying in vain, "O do not that abominable thing which I hate?" "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness," etc.—*From Jay*.

#### CAREFUL WALKING.—Verses 30-33.

After Moses was chosen mediator he directed the people to return to their tents, urged them to observe carefully all the commandments which they had received, and not to turn aside to the right hand or to the left, that it might be well with them. "This signifieth an exact care to walk in God's Law, as in the highway from which men may not turn aside, as in Deut. ii. 27."—*Ainsworth*.

**I. Human life is under God's direction.** To Israel the message was—"Get you into your tents again;" but to Moses, "Stand thou here by me." Thus some are appointed to one place, and others to another. God's law is given for guidance, laid down (for *law* means that which is *laid down* or *fixed*) to show us the way. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

**II. This direction is given by chosen agency.** Men often choose their own guides and miss their way. Intellect, education, and human laws are not sufficient. The Scriptures and the Christian ministry are the appointed means for instruction. 1. *The ministry of man*. Moses was chosen teacher and mediator between God and His people. Men must know God in the holy life and teaching of their fellow men, "Speak thou to us." 2. *The revelation of God*. Moses had not to speak his own, but the words which God had spoken to him. If we speak not according to the law we have no light—no truth in us. "I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them."

**III. This direction, given by chosen agency, is easily understood.** "Do, therefore, as the Lord your God hath commanded you." So plainly is the path



opened up that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." 1. There must be *no halting*. "*Observe* to do." The eye and heart must be fixed. Hesitate and linger not. Never fear, but humbly walk before God. 2. There must be *no turning aside*. "Ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." "Let thine eyes look right on" (Prov. iv. 25-27), not behind, nor all around, but "straight before thee." Straightforward progress will ensure reward. Pray for perseverance and guidance. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'" 3. There must be *no partiality*. "Ye shall walk in *all* the ways." The obedience must be full, unreserved, and unwearied. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments (Ps. xi. 96)."

IV. When the direction thus given is obeyed, the rewards will be great. "That ye may live, and that it may be well with you." "Verily there is a reward for the righteous," not of debt, but of sovereign grace. A *present* reward in temporal benefits and spiritual enjoyments. A *future* reward of eternal bliss (Is. xlviii. 18; Jer. vii. 23). In "keeping His commandments there is *great* reward."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 29. *God's wish for Israel*. 1. A true heart. 2. Sincere obedience. 3. Perpetual happiness. *Such a heart*. That heart that will enable us to fear the Legislator, and in thought, word, and deed keep all His commandments. But such a heart, so inclined, is an evidence of previous acceptance; and such conduct resulting from such a heart is the evidence of that character which belongs to a christian, and indicates one whose state has been changed in Christ, and whose character has been elevated by sanctification of the Holy Spirit.—*Cumming*.

*Perfect obedience*. 1. Its source—the heart. 2. Its extent. All commandments and always. 3. Its ruling principle—the fear of God. 4. Its blessed results—well with individuals "and their children for ever."

Ver. 30-33. 1. The honour conferred upon Moses. "Near" God. 2. The duty of Moses—"stand" in attentive, willing attitude, as mediator and teacher. "I stood between the Lord

and you at that time, to show you the word of the Lord; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount."

*God's manifestations in their effect upon men*. Repelling some and attracting others. This effect depends upon our state of mind and moral condition. *Teach them*—1. The *position* of a true teacher. "Here by me." 2. The *matter* of a true teacher. "All the commandments and the statutes and the judgments." 3. The *design* of a true teacher to produce obedience.

Ver. 33. *Walk in the ways*. 1. Specific direction. 2. Activity and progress in that direction. We must not simply know, but practice the commandments. We are ignorant, and require Divine instruction; weak, and need strength and support. Our hearts must be right, and we must be steadfast in His covenant (Ps. lxxviii. 37.) Like travellers in the way, we must look carefully to the end and be careful lest we miss the way.

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1-5. *Law.* "These words" comprise the whole duty of man; and as interpreted by Christ, they are so comprehensive that there is no conceivable condition in which the human race can exist where these precepts are not applicable as a rule. The language of each is so brief, and so precise, as to be capable of furnishing a perfect guide for the moral government of man. It is so immeasurably superior in its character to that of all other nations that there is no way of accounting for its existence, except by ascribing it to Divine revelation. Infidels themselves are constrained to admit its high origin. For how came the Jews to possess so pure and admirable a law? How were they distinguished for such a sublime code of morality, while all other people, some of them far superior in civilisation and the arts to the Hebrews, fell far short of them in this respect? It was God who "spake all these words." (*Dr. Jamieson.*) The moral law is a copy of God's will, our spiritual directory; it shows us what sins to avoid, what duties to pursue. It has truth and goodness in it (*Neh. ix. 13*). Truth, for God spake it; and goodness, for there is nothing the commandment enjoins but it is for our good.—*Watson.*

Vers. 6, 7. *First.* This may well lead the van, and be set in front of all the commandments, because it is the foundation of all true religion. None will have cause to repent of cleaving to God and His service. Cardinal Wolsey said, "Oh, if I had served my God as I have my king, He would never have left me thus."—*Watson.*

Vers. 8-10. *Second.* People pray to the images of the gods, implore them on bended knees, sit or stand long days before them, throw them money, and sacrifice beasts to them with deep respect.—*Seneca.*

Ver. 11. *Third.* Remember the

commination and threatening in the text. Here is a *meiosis*—less is said and more intended. "He will not hold him guiltless;" that is, He will be severely avenged on such a one. Here the Lord speaks after the manner of a judge, who holds the court of assize. The judge is God himself; the accusers, Satan and a man's conscience; the charge is, "taking God's name in vain;" the accused is found guilty and condemned: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless."—*Watson.*

Vers. 12-15. *Fourth.* O, what a blessing is Sunday, interposed between the waves of worldly business, like the Divine path of the Israelites through Jordan. (*Wilberforce.*) The streams of religion run deeper or shallower, as the banks of the Sabbath are kept up or neglected. (*Calcott.*) Coleridge once said to a friend on Sunday morning, "I feel as if God had, by giving the Sabbath, given fifty-two springs in every year."—*Bowes.*

Ver. 16. *Fifth.* Richard Knill so regarded this commandment, that he would not even go out as a missionary without his mother's consent. He said, "I know that God never smiles on a boy that breaks his mother's heart."—*Pul. Com.*

Ver. 17. *Sixth.* There is a close connection between anger and murder. "Killing is not mere blood shedding. Anger without cause is murder. Oppression of the weak is murder. Depriving a man of the means of getting a livelihood, to gratify revenge, is murder."—*Dr. Parker.*

Ver. 18. Adultery debases a person, and makes him resemble the beasts—Nay, it is worse than brutish; for some creatures void of reason, by the instinct of nature, observe some decorum and chastity. The turtle dove is a chaste creature, and keeps to its mate; and the stork wherever he flies, comes

nto no nest but his own. Naturalists write that if a stork, leaving its own mate, joins with another, all the rest of the storks fall upon it and pull its feathers from it. Adultery is worse than brutish, it degrades a person of his honour.—*Watson*.

Ver. 19. *Eighth*. A man may rob God as well as his neighbour. He who wastes his employer's time is a thief. He who withholds just praise is a thief—social and literary thieving. He who detracts from the just honour of his fellow man is a thief. He who vows and does not pay is a thief.—*Dr. Parker*.

Ver. 20. *Ninth*. A man that hath no virtue in himself ever envieth virtue in others; for men's minds will either feed upon their own good or upon others' evil; and who wanteth the one will prey upon the other. (*Bacon*.) There would not be so many open mouths if there were not so many open ears.—*Bp. Hall*.

To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it.—

*Tennyson*.

Soft buzzing slander; silky moths  
That eat an honest name.—*Thomson*.

Ver. 21. *Tenth*. The covetous man is like a greedy ostrich, which devours

any metal; but it is with an intent to feed upon it, and in effect it makes a shift to digest and excrete it. The avaricious man is like the foolish chough, which loves to steal money only to hide it.—*Archbp. Trench*.

The cloyed will,  
That satiate yet unsatisfied desire,  
That tub both filled and running.—

*Shakespeare*.

Vers. 22–25. *Great voice*. Richard Morris, a Baptist minister in England, when a young man attended as a spectator a funeral, which he had followed into St. Mary's Church, Stamford. His mind being solemnised and softened by the scene, the blast of six trumpets sounded together to set the evening watch, and reverberated through the dome, striking the whole audience with awe. The thought was vividly suggested to his mind that he must certainly hear the tremendous sound of the trump of God. With this impression upon his mind, Mr. Morris retired to his room and prayed to that God whom he knew would be his judge. His prayer was heard, and he began a life of religion and usefulness. This trifling occurrence arrested attention, gave rise to workings of conscience which ended in conversion.—*Whitcross*.

## CHAPTER VI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Moses had rehearsed the law, reminded the people of the circumstances in which it was given, and now he sets forth its essential and fundamental doctrines, the nature and attributes of God and the mode of worshipping Him.

1. *Commandments*, *lit.*, commandment (sing. noun), equivalent to “the law,” cf. iv. 44, *i.e.*, the sum and substance of all that Jehovah had given (cf. *Keil*). *Statutes*, etc., explanatory of the command.

2. Reason for giving law to awaken fear and obedience to every injunction.

3. Constant fear of God would result in prosperity and increase of the nation. cf. Gen. xii. 1; xvii. 6; Ex. iii. 8, 17.

4–9. The exposition now begins with a declaration concerning Jehovah (*Elohim* plu.). This “does not relate to the unity of God, but simply states that to Him alone, the name *Jehovah* rightfully belongs, as the one absolute God to whom no other *Elohim* can be compared, cf. Zech. xiv. 9.”—*Keil*.



5 To this one God, who is Israel's God, a love must be given, with *the heart*, seat of feeling and affection; *the soul*, thy breath, the vital spirit, or rational soul, capable of intelligence and thought, Matt. xxii. 37; Mark xii. 30; Luke x. 27; *strength* of body and soul.

6, 7. True love will be regulated by regard to the commandments, which must be laid up in *the heart*, ever present to thought and will; taught to children, and talked about on all fitting occasions. *Teach, lit.*, whet or sharpen, a figure for earnest and frequent instruction.

8. Sign, token, memorial, as rings used on wrists and fingers containing religious sentiment, John iii. 33; 2 Tim. ii. 19. Frontlets, Ex. xiii. 16. Moses here turns to good account usages prevalent in his times, and still common in the East. (See *Speak Com.*)

9. Posts, Ex. xii. 7; Deut. xi. 20; Job xix. 23, 25.

10-15. After specific duties, Moses gives warnings and cautions against dangers to which prosperity would expose them, viz., of forgetting God and His mercies. Entrance into Canaan brought them into possessions for which they did not labour with their own hands; beautiful towns, houses full of good things, wells of water, vineyards and olive plantations. *Swearing* (ver. 13) refers to judicial oaths in court. "Moses refers to legal swearing; our Lord to swearing in common conversation," God's worship precludes idolatry (vers. 14, 15), which a jealous God will not endure, but punish with destruction from the face of the earth.

16-19. Tempting God by murmuring and unbelief as at *Massah*, i.e., Rephidim (Ex. xvii. 1-7), is forbidden; diligent observance of commandments and right-doing are urged. *To cast out*, (v. 19) the casting out, the result of obedience. Ex. xxiii. 27; xxxiv. 11.

20-25. Directions for the instruction of children more fully given than in ver. 7. *Signs* (22) and wonders, cf. iv. 34. *Mighty hand*, exercise of great power. Ps. cv. 23-28. *Our good*, (24), first reason for serving God, it is right; other blessings follow. *Righteousness*, i.e., observance of law constitutes their title to the land and gives them acceptance with God. *Before the Lord*, in his right and according to his judgment, cf. Ps. lvi. 13; cxvi. 9.

## THE FEAR OF GOD THE END OF THE COMMANDMENTS.—Verses 1-3.

Two objects are indicated in these verses as sought by the Law-giver in thus expounding anew these important duties. He aims at awakening a holy fear of God in the heart of his people; a fear which shall manifest itself in steadfast fulfilment of the covenant; and he seeks no less the temporal prosperity of Israel, which is shown as a certain result upon such fidelity. Thus the glory of God and the welfare of man are seen to be the grand ends he has in view.—*Speak. Com.*

I. The Commandments of God should be the rule of Life. "That ye might do them." Plato and other philosophers taught that perfection consisted in conformity to certain *forms* or *ideas* laid down for man by his Creator. But for one thing to be the standard or measure of another it must be *fixed* and true. Sophists would persuade us that there is nothing fixed and permanent. Our senses deceive us, the laws of nature change, right and wrong, virtue and vice, are fancies and vary with individual feelings and tastes. But God's law is unchangeable, His truth is sure and eternal. He has given rules for moral life and conduct. Our own sensations must not be set forth, our own opinions exalted into standards of truth. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

II. The fear of God is the most powerful principle to produce obedience to this rule. Love to the Lawgiver begets respect for his law. We cannot honour a master, nor be happy in his service without love for his character. Affection influences the will and prompts to happy obedience. Service from any other motive would not be disinterested and true, either in religion or daily life. The fear, or the love of God in the heart therefore, is the only power to produce loyal obedience to God.

"I cannot worship what I cannot love."

**III. To beget this obedience is the design of religious instruction.** "The Lord your God commanded to teach you." We must know a person before we can love and serve him; so the law of God must be known before it can be observed. The people must be taught the character and will of God. The children must be trained and educated, not for their own glory, nor that of their parents, but for the service and glory of God. Obedience to God's law must be the design of family training and economy. "Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may *hear*, and that they may *learn* and fear the Lord your God, and observe to *do* all the words of this law."

**IV. The results of religious instruction and obedience to God's law will be beneficent.** Since the law of God consults our highest good, obedience will always be to our interest. God mercifully teaches what is good, and promises to bestow that good upon us. In various ways, personal and social, temporal and spiritual, benefits come to help us to remember Him who is "the highest good," "God over all, and blessed for evermore." 1. *In personal happiness.* "Well with thee" in body, mind, and estate. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him" (Isa. iii. 10). "But it shall not be well with the wicked because he feareth not before God" (Ecc. viii. 13). 2. *In length of life.* "That thy days may be prolonged." "The wicked shall not live out half their days." 3. *In the increase of posterity.* "That ye may increase mightily." Virtue always tends to promote health, material prosperity, and national welfare. Without recognition of God and obedience to His commands, we cannot secure earthly or heavenly inheritance "in the land that floweth with milk and honey."

#### DIVINE REQUIREMENTS.—*Verses 4, 5.*

These verses assert that Jehovah is one, indivisible and supreme God, and worthy of love supreme and undivided. It is not enough to *hear*, we must obey and obey with all the heart and soul.

**I. God is worthy of our love and service.** We love a person for what he is in himself and for what he does to others. God is excellent and exalted in himself. He alone is God, and therefore deserves our homage. Goethe taught that "beauty, truth and goodness" are the objects of human worship. But this is "the religion of culture," the worship of the "creature rather than the Creator," and does not satisfy personal wants. God is a Living Being, on whom we can think and with whom we can converse—the centre and cause of all beauty, goodness and truth. In Him these are objects for worship, and subjects for enjoyment. He does good, makes good and communicates His blessings unto His creatures. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power."

**II. God requires us to love and serve Him with entire self-surrender.** The terms used to indicate this are most comprehensive. 1. *Affectionately*, "with all thine heart," without indolence, unfaithfulness or half-heartedness. With fervent, undivided affection. If the heart, the whole heart be withheld, apostacy will be the result. 2. *Intelligently*, "with all thy mind," (Mark xii. 30; Luke x. 27). The intellect and understanding must be concerned as well as the heart. God's service is not a blind, unreasonable service. "We *know* what we worship." 3. *Energetically*, "with all thy might" of will and active powers. If not free and cheerful, it is slavish and irksome. "If ye be willing and obedient," (Isa. i. 19). 4. *Entirely*, "with

all thy soul." It must be sincere and constant, not superficial but "rooted in love," (Eph. iii. 17). God must be loved above all creatures, with all our powers and with all the energy of those powers. "The royal law according to the scripture."

III. God's relationship to us is a motive to prompt this required service. "The Lord thy God." Jehovah was Israel's God and had shown Himself such. Nothing can touch the will, and excite to motion which we do not perceive and appreciate. What is out of the view of mind and heart cannot affect them. God's presence had been seen and His goodness displayed in wonderful ways. He made a covenant with Israel, claimed them for His people, and gave them every reason to honour and obey Him. "I am the Lord thy God."

# HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 3. *Hearing and doing.* "Hear O Israel and observe to do it." 1. *The Word heard.* Man deaf and blind in spiritual things. "Having ears, he hears not; having eyes he sees not." Only when God speaks does the heart open (Lydia) with new power of attention and interest. "Be more ready to hear." 2. *The Word considered.* "Observe"—attendance is not attention—eyes and ears must be open. "In order to learn," says Coleridge, "we must attend; in order to profit by what we have learnt, we must think." "Take heed how ye hear." 3. *The Word obeyed.* "Do it." We look for novelty and not for edification. "Our great object is to be impressed and affected, and to have old and new truths reduced to experience and practice."—*Judge Hale.*

Ver. 4. *The unity of God.* 1. *The centre of Israel's belief.* How sound in principle, elevated in tone and powerful in moral influence, compared with heathen religions! 2. *The foundation of Israel's polity.* Polytheism was the basis of other social fabrics. "This clause not merely forbids polytheism, but also syncretism, which reduces the one absolute God, as King over all the earth, to a national deity, a Baal (Hos. ii. 18), and in fact every form of theism and deism, which creates for itself a supreme God according to philosophical abstractions and ideas" (Keil). 3. *The law of harmony in our moral constitution.* The mind is not

capable of containing more than one object at a time. The heart and affections can only be loyally attached to one Sovereign, and fully developed by one person.

Ver. 4, 5. 1. *The command.* "Hear, O Israel." God seeks to make us attentive to what He is in Himself, and what He is to us—to check our presumption—kindle our affection and dissipate our fear. 2. *The duty.* Love God with all thine heart. First the heart and then the deed. We must first *be* right before we can *do* right. "It is greater to conquer by means of the heart, than to conquer the heart," says Schiller. "Give me thine heart." 3. *The method of performing this duty.* (a) Willingly. God sometimes accepts the will for the deed; never the deed without the will. (b) Sincerely. Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart (2 Chron. xxv. 2). (c) Constantly. "Blessed is he that doeth righteousness at all times" (Ps. cvi. 3).

Moral life proceeds *from* the heart, and manifests itself without, *in* the three forms of activity indicated. The impulse Godward proceeds *from* the heart, and is realised in the life *through* the affection, which feeds on that supreme object; *through* the will, which consecrates itself actively to the accomplishment of His will; and *through* the mind which pursues the track of His thoughts in all His works.—*Godet.*



THE METHOD OF PRESERVING THE DIVINE LAW.—*Verses 6-9.*

To keep a sense of duty in their minds, it was ordered that Israel should carry great principles into daily life. A system of parental instruction was instituted, and provision was made for the remembrance of the commandments in most familiar and oft-recurring scenes of life. The means of preserving religion are minutely specified.

**I. In personal experience.** "Shall be in thine heart." The memory may be good and the tongue glib without any feeling of heart. The truth must not only be received by the mind, but deposited and warmed by the heart. We must understand, value and love the Bible. Since we are in danger of losing the things, if we forget the words: "these words" must be matters of experience and conversation. Our soul must be brought under their influence and direction. "The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide" (Ps. xxxvii. 31).

**II. In home training.** "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children. Children are ignorant and self-willed. They will never instinctively or intuitively develop into saints. And while their secular education must not be forgotten their religious training must be first and most diligent. This may be given.

1. *In various ways.* In domestic intercourse, "when thou sittest in *thine* house;" in ordinary walking, "when thou *walkest* by the way;" in the times of the day, "when thou *liest down* and *risest up*;" by common representations, "for *signs* and *frontlets*," and by constant writing, "thou shalt *write* them."
2. *In diligent methods.* "Diligently," sharpen up the children by earnest, assiduous and repeated instruction. As tools are prepared for work, so children should be taught for God and prepared for life.

**III. In Religious Conversation.** "Talk of them." In the present age knowledge is spread by writing more than by speech. In earlier ages oral communications were the means of instruction. The living voice is still a great power in the world, and its mighty influence will be felt in future generations. Conversation was one of the methods employed by Jewish doctors and Jesus Himself, for imparting knowledge. Among friends and companions, in the domestic and social circle, in walking in a journey and in retiring to rest, we may converse about Divine things. "I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed." Ps. cxix. 46.

PARENTAL OBLIGATION.—*Verse 7, 8.*

In these verses it appears—(1) That parents are bound to give their children a religious education, to sow in their hearts the seeds of scriptural truth, to teach them the elements of christian doctrine, to inculcate upon them the observance of moral duties, and to beget in them an attachment to the ordinances of religion, in their attendance on which we may expect the communication of the grace of the Holy Spirit, to render the word of truth, the power of God unto their salvation. (2) God's testimonies must not only be taught to our children, but the utmost diligence must be used to make them understand them. "Thou shalt teach them diligently." That is, again and again, as one who whets a blunt instrument in order to sharpen it, which is done by *reiterated friction or grinding*. This part of parental duty is a most difficult task, and it requires much patience, much prudence, much judgment and much piety in the parents, to enable them to do this good, this most important work, in the best and most

effectual manner. (3) Parents are required to embrace every opportunity of inculcating the Divine commands upon their children. 1. This duty must be performed at home and abroad; "When thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way." 2. It must be done in the night season and in the daytime; "when thou liest down and when thou risest up." (4) This command shows that every father had access to scripture, in a language which he and his children understood. Moses entertained no fear that the people would misinterpret it, or wrest it to their destruction. It is probable that many a Jew did so; nevertheless, that was no reason against every Jew possessing a copy of the law. The fact is, that under the Jewish law, the scriptures were put into the hands of all kinds of persons, young and old, male and female, learned and unlearned, priest and people, with a command to read them and teach them to others, so that faith of all might rest on the foundation.—*Rev. J. Wilson.*

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Vers. 6, 7. *The Bible—the Family Book.* To be read and taught in the family to promote personal piety and religious education. "The most precious legacy you can leave your children is a thoroughly sound Christian education. This will never be finally and for ever forgotten; for in the worst and most distant aberration from God, some early light struck out in the early years of childhood, will leap like a live spark from memory, as was the case with John Newton, when a prodigal at the helm in a tempestuous sea—the text forgotten for twenty years, but taught him by his mother in the nursery, was the first on which turned his everlasting and happy destiny.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Ver. 7. Children should be taught the principles which they understand not. (1.) That they might have occasion much to think of the things that are so much and commonly urged. (2.) That if any extremity should come, they might have certain seeds of comfort and direction to guide and support them. (3.) That their condemnation might be more just, if having these so much in their mouths, they should not get something of them into their hearts.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 9. "Write them upon the posts." 1. At the time this command was given there were few written copies of the whole law, and the people had it read to them only at the feast of tabernacles. God, therefore, seemed to have appointed, at least for the present, that some select sentences of the law should *literally* be written upon their gates and walls, or on slips of parchment, to be worn about their wrists, or bound upon their foreheads. 2. The *spirit* of the command, however, and the chief thing intended, undoubtedly was that they should give all diligence, and use all means to keep God's laws always in remembrance; as men frequently bind something upon their hands or put something before their eyes, to prevent forgetfulness of a thing that they much desire to remember. But the Jews, forgetting the *spirit* and design of this precept, used these things as superstitious people do amulets or charms. They used also to put these slips of parchment into a piece of cane, or other hollow wood, and fasten that to the door of their houses, and of each particular door in them, and as often as they go in and out they make it a part of their devotion to touch the parchment and kiss it.—*J. Wilson.*

THE DANGERS OF PROSPERITY.—*Verses 10–12.*

Moses anticipates the time when Israel will come into possession of Canaan with all the good promised. But he also sees the dangers to which this prosperity will expose them—forgetfulness, idolatry (ver. 14) and distrust (ver. 16). He warns them against these dangers, and describes the remedy. “Forewarned, forearmed.”

**I. Prosperity renders the heart insensible when we should be grateful** “When thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord.” In poverty we despond, murmur or blaspheme; in prosperity we deny God (Prov. xxx. 9). “*Prosperity* doth best discover vices,” says Bacon. Exaltation often intoxicates, and blessings easily gained are not often valued. We are most sensible of things which cost us dearly; but unmindful of the giver when the gifts come easily and freely. We riot in carnal luxuries, and the heart becomes effeminate and self-indulgent, hardened to the reproofs of the Divine law and to the goodness and claims of the Lawgiver. “They did eat, and were filled, and became fat (*senseless, doltish*, cf. Is. vi. 10), Neh. ix. 25.

**II. Prosperity begets pride when we should be humble.** Man depends upon God for everything, yet often casts off God, expects nothing and fears nothing from Him. He is proud of rank, talent, and acquisitions, like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30). We forget our need of God, our obligations to Him, and become self-sufficient instead of humble. “In all time of our wealth, Good Lord deliver us.”

**III. Prosperity lulls into carnal security when we should be watchful.** “Beware” of the danger and guard against it. A self-indulgent life, incapacitates for vigorous watchful obedience to God’s commands. Nature is subdued by that which feeds it, its sensitiveness and spirituality die away, and carnal security leads to ease and perfect indifference.

“O souls! In whom no heavenly fire is found,  
Fat minds and ever grovelling on the ground.”—*Dryden*.

FORGETFULNESS OF GOD.—*Verses 12–15.*

When we give our thoughts and hearts to the world God is soon forgotten. He is displaced and ignored, and we become guilty of ingratitude, robbery, and idolatry.

**I. The danger pointed out.** “Beware, lest thou forget God.” 1. *Non-recognition of God’s presence.* Even amid sensible and awful displays of that presence “they forgot God and His wonders that He had showed them.” 2. *Disregard of God’s providence.* “Which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt.” A providence most constant and striking, yet despised when they should have remembered it most.” They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea (Ps. cvi. 7). 3. *Disobedience to God’s law.* We cannot serve and obey those whom we forget. God has the greatest claim upon our gratitude and love. But “when the danger is past God is forgotten.” Men cry for mercy in trouble and adversity, but when these are changed for sunshine and substance “they forsake God who made them, and lightly esteem His law.”

“Satan now is wiser than of yore,  
And tempts by making rich, not making poor.”—*Pope*.



II. The Method of avoiding this danger specified. God provides safeguards against dangers into which we are apt to fall. Some are given in these words : 1. *The fear of God.* "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God." Reverence for God is the great preservative from sin. On this principle Abraham educated his children and governed his household. Joseph feared to offend God and was directed to wisest counsels. "Happy is the man that feareth alway." 2. *Obedience to God.* "Serve Him." We cannot forget God if we walk with Him and continually obey His will. Servants must not neglect their master's commands, nor soldiers rush out of the ranks. Disobedience is disrespectful, disloyal, and insolent. "Be not hasty to go out of his sight." 3. *Non-conformity to evil customs.* "Ye shall not go after other Gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you," (ver. 14.) Israel would be tempted by the license and indulgence of idol worship around them. Numbers influence and attract men. The fashions, the principles, and the maxims of the world govern many professors. But we must not join a majority in any sinful cause, however prevalent and popular. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." 4. *Public confession of God.* "And shalt swear by His name." God is the source of truth and the avenger of wrong. In all covenants and appeals we must regard Him. In ordinary intercourse and in common affairs of life we must be truthful. We must recognise the presence and majesty of God and not assert anything but what is right. God in the fulfilment of His word must be recognised as our example of faithfulness. "He that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth" (*lit.* the God of *Amen*, *i.e.*, firm and true, *cf.* Rev. iii. 14 ; xix. 11) Is. lxxv. 16.

#### THE FORBIDDEN PATH.—Verses 14–15.

In all our hearts there is a tendency to depart from God, to forget what He commands, "to go after" what He forbids. This forbidden path is described—1. *It is entered by many.* The path of "the people," "the gods" of the age. But the *vox populi* is not always the *vox Dei*. Idolatry of every kind is the root and nourisher of error and superstition—the expression and epitome of human nature—the foul dishonour to God and His supremacy. "Go not after other gods to serve them and to worship them" (Jer. xxv. 6). 2. *It is offensive to God.* It stirs up God's anger and rouses His jealousy. Bp. Patrick observes, that we never find in law or prophets, *anger*, or *fury*, or *jealousy* or *indignation*, attributed to God, but upon occasion of idolatry. 3. *It is destructive in its end.* "Destroy thee from off the face of the earth." Idolatry corrupts the holy and petrifies the heart. Like a withering mildew it overspreads the earth and blights the nations. God has condemned and cursed it, and will punish all who are guilty. The warning voice from above should be heard ; "Ye shall bear the sins of your idols, and ye shall know that I am the Lord God."

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Ver. 13. *Threefold characteristics of God's service.* 1. God to be honoured. 2. God to be feared. 3. God to be served. "*Not forgetting*" is described from a positive point of view as fearing God, *serving Him*, and *swearing by His name*. Fear is placed first, as

the fundamental characteristic of the Israelitish worship of God. It was no slavish fear, but simply the holy awe of a sinner before the holy God, which includes love rather than excludes it. "Fearing" is a matter of the heart ; "serving," a matter of working and

striving ; and “swearing in His name,” the practical manifestation of the worship of God in word and conversation.—*Keil*.

Ver. 13-16. 1. The<sup>r</sup> fear of God the principle of service. 2. The preventative from idolatry (vers. 14, 15). 3. The remedy for unbelief.

Vers. 14, 15. *Ye shall not go after*. 1. The course forbidden. 2. The warnings to keep from it ; God’s anger and God’s jealousy. 3. The consequences of disregarding these warnings. “Destroy thee from off the face of the earth.” When lesser warnings will not serve, God looks into His quiver for

deadly arrows.” “From hardness of heart,” etc. *Serving God*. Inquire— I. What it is to serve God. 1. To dedicate ourselves wholly to Him. 2. To make His law the rule of our life. 3. To endeavour to please Him in all things. II. Why should we serve Him ? Because He is—1. Our Maker. 2. Our Preserver. 3. Our Redeemer. 4. Our Master by covenant. III. The nature of the exhortation here given. 1. Directions : serve Him scripturally, obediently, willingly, cheerfully, faithfully, etc. 2. Motives : This is the end of your creation and of all God’s mercies to you ; it is the work of heaven, and will be well rewarded.—*Wm. Stevens*.

### TEMPTING GOD.—*Verse 16*.

The word “tempt,” here means to *try to prove* ; and mindful of the circumstances alluded to God was not only provoked, but “tested” in His power and goodness. This sin we are warned against, for the apostle distinctly recognises that events in Israel’s history were typical and filled with Divine purpose and warning. “All these things happened unto them for ensamples (*types, patterns*) to admonish and instruct” 1 Cor. x. ii.) How did Israel and how can we tempt God ?

**I. By doubting God’s presence and power to help.** God was present with them night and day in the wonderful pillar, yet they cried, “Is the Lord among us or not ?” (Ex. xvii. 7.) God had destroyed their enemies, delivered them from famine and danger, yet they “tempted God in their hearts” and cried in unbelief, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness ?” (Ps. lxxviii. 18-20.) We murmur at our daily mercies—the manna and the stream ; count actual enjoyments nothing, if they do not conform to our fancy ; and pine for some imaginary good. When we circumscribe to infinite wisdom, mistrust omnipotent power to accomplish His purpose, we “limit (*sign, requiring miracle* to satisfy us) the Holy One of Israel” (Ps. lxxviii. 41.)

**II. By rebelling against God’s authority.** We find fault with God’s will, set up our own will instead, and thus insult God. At the Red Sea and the waters of Marah, in the wilderness of sin and in Rephidim, they provoked God their Creator and Lawgiver. They were base enough to deny His presence, doubt His power, and abuse His servant. In their wicked disposition “they sinned still,” went on sinning and rebelling, and were not “in a mood to be convinced.” “Yea, they spake against God.”

**III. By provoking God’s patience.** He led them in the wilderness, gave them plentiful supplies, but their gratitude was not commensurate with His goodness. “How often did they provoke Him ?” Times enough did they rebel, and were as constant in provocation as God was in kindness. “They have tempted me these ten times” (*i.e., often and in full measure*), Num. xiv. 22 ; but at last God’s patience was provoked, and they were punished for their sins. God is not insensible to our conduct. We may vex His Holy Spirit, which

would have been long ago withdrawn if God had not been merciful to us. We are dependent, and need God's guidance and grace ; let us not "grieve Him in the desert." As Israel tried God by longing for the things left behind in Egypt and distrusted for the future, so we may tempt and offend God by hankering after pleasures which are forbidden, longing for that liberty in sin from which Christ has delivered us. "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents" (1 Cor. x. 9).

### THE WAY OF LIFE AND SAFETY.—*Verses 17-19.*

God is never indifferent to His claims upon us. Epicurus depicted his gods as totally regardless, and scorning the affairs of earth. But our God has "set his heart on man," desires his eternal good, and points out the way to secure it. Amid the darkness and dangers of our journey God has provided help, "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light ; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Prov. vi. 23).

**I. A way in which God's word must be our constant guide.** "Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God." The way has not to be invented or found out ; it is revealed. We have not to *make*, but *keep* the command. "The way of life is above to the wise." It is of heavenly, not of earthly origin, neither devised nor discerned by foolish men. We must constantly recognise and devoutly consult God's word as our guide in our journey. 1. *Carefully*, as travellers anxious to be right and not lose the way. Some give careless service to God, and careless attention to His word. There must be no cold and formal observance, but effort to please and obey. 2. *Earnestly*. Diligence signifies not only energy and activity, but heart and affection. Heartiness and love must be displayed (*Diligently* the Latin for *lovingly*). When Aristotle was asked what benefit he had derived from his philosophy, he replied : "I have learnt to do without constraint that which others do from fear of the law." "I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved." 3. *Constantly*. Not fitful or accidental, but patient and continual regard. Many forget and forsake the law. If it is displeasing to us, we easily neglect it ; but when our hearts and minds are fixed upon it, then we love and practise it continually. When governed by the Word we are wise, safe, and strong. "Happy is the mind to which the word is a special companion," says Bernard (*cf.* Ps. cxix. 7, 24 ; Prov. vi. 22).

**II. A way in which God's will must be our constant regard.** "Do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord." The will of God is the standard of duty, and this must not be lowered to meet the opinions and wishes of men. It is not what is useful or expedient before men, but what is *right before God*. That alone is right which is pleasing to Him, which He commands, and which He requires from us. Conformity to God's will and character must be the aim of our life. In this respect Christ is our example, who came to do the will of Him that sent Him, and could say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John vi. 29).

**III. A way which leads to our present and future good.** Religion confers the highest blessings upon us. The will of God is the fountain of all happiness, and the service of God the source of well being. 1. *Our present good*. "That it may be well with thee." If it is not well with us, if we are not benefited by serving God, we may suspect something to be wrong. Our thoughts, employments, and pursuits may be opposed to God's will, and then it cannot be well with us. "It shall be well with them that fear God, but it shall not be



well with the wicked." 2. *Our future good.* Man has a future of weal or woe. To forget this future is simply to court destruction. But continual regard to God's will, and dependence upon God's grace (*a*) *will help us to overcome enemies.* "To cast out all thine enemies from before thee." We cannot overcome in our own attitude and strength. God dislodges our enemies, and clears our way to heaven (*cf.* Ex. xxiii. 22; Jos. xxiv. 8); (*b*) *will secure to us the inheritance*—residence on earth, progress and grace in Christian life, and heaven at length. Thus do the Scriptures set before us the way of life. Are we walking in it? "What man is he that desireth life and loveth (good days, or days of good, Seventy) many days, that he may see good" (Ps. xxxiv. 12).

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Ver. 16. *Tempting God* (Ps. lxxviii. 18). They tempted God, tried His patience over and over again, made as it were another experiment upon it, and, from the expression of "*tempting Him in their heart*," it would seem as if they had made it a thing of mental calculation whether He would still bear with them (*T. Chalmers* on Ps. lxxviii. 18). 1. They tempted God's patience. 2. They tempted God's wisdom. 3. They tempted God's power. 4. They tempted God's wrath. Herein, as in a mirror, we see ourselves. Israel in the wilderness acted out, as in a drama, all the story of man's conduct towards his God.—*Treasury of David.*

Ver. 17. Notice. 1. The Lawgiver. "The Lord your God." 2. The au-

thority interposed. Testimonies and statutes "which He commanded thee." 3. The regard for this authority required. "Keep the commandments."

Vers. 17–19. 1. The end desired—"good." 2. The method of securing it. Filial obedience to God. 3. The results which follow. "Possess the good land," etc.

*The charge of Moses to Israel.* In this passage we remark—I. A solemn charge given. 1. Hear the word of the Lord. 2. Observe the word of the Lord, doctrine, precept, promise. 3. Obey the word of the Lord. II. Important benefits proposed. 1. Safety. 2. Prosperity. 3. Peaceful possession of Canaan.—*Zeta.*

### THE RELIGION OF ENQUIRY.—*Verses 20–25.*

God's remarkable dealings with His people could not fail to excite their curiosity even to the latest generations. There was an express injunction that in every succeeding age they should carefully acquaint their children with the facts of their history. There must be a perpetual memorial of their great deliverance and a profound reverence in the mind of the nation of that Supreme Power to whom they were indebted for their civil and religious privileges. Questions were to be encouraged, parents were to answer questions by explaining divine institutions, that the laws of God might be perpetuated, family religion nourished, and national good secured.

I. **The Religion of the Bible cultivates free enquiry.** "When thy son asketh thee what mean the testimonies." Man thinks. Reason is the attribute of his soul. The religion for man must not therefore overlook his intellect. Christianity is adapted to man in his capacity for knowledge and in his power to reason and conclude from that knowledge. "Come let us *reason* together," is the language of our Creator. Many declare that Christianity is only fit for the ignorant and weak minded, and that it affords no scope for free enquiry.

But it affords the finest scope for reason in which the mind can be exercised. Examination and enquiry are demanded from everyone. We are to "*think* on these things," to "*search* the scriptures," and "*prove* all things (test like money changers) and hold fast that which is good" (2 Thes. v. 21).

**II. God has made provision for the demands of free enquiry.** We cannot help but ask "from whence am I and whither am I going?" "How can man be just with God?" "What mean the testimonies," etc. Solemn questions will prompt themselves which neither the philosophy of man nor the light of nature can answer. But God answers man's enquiries—1. *In the facts of history.* "We were bondsmen in Egypt." In the Bible we have a record of facts beginning with the Creation and leading us through various dispensations to the consummation of God's purpose in the death and work of Christ. In the lives of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles, in the events of Jewish history and in the works of Jesus Christ we have grand historic facts, which are the basis of religion, the foundation of our faith, and the elements, "the rudiments of childhood's lessons" (*cf.* Gal. iii. 24 ; iv. 3). 2. *In the doctrines of Scripture.* Upon the facts of history the doctrines of religion are built. There is a growing tendency to take ideas without facts ; to separate events from their supernatural surroundings ; and to find in Scripture "a legendary summary of primitive belief." But in the facts and doctrines of Christianity God has provided for the necessities of our nature and not left us to "cunningly devised fables." 3. *In the records of Providence.* God's power and presence were seen in His dealings with Israel. His purpose and promise have been fulfilled in the history of nations. The system of Providence is accommodatory to our nature in teaching by sensible signs and striking events. "The Lord showed signs and wonders."

**III. It is our interest to enquire and possess this Religion.** The facts and doctrines of Scripture must be confirmed in our experience and traced in our life conduct. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." If we fear God and keep His commandments we shall realise the power of God to help ; the grace of God to pardon and renew, the need of the Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide. 1. *It will be for our good*, verse 24. To investigate truth, to follow God will not only be enjoyment but "our good." Our views will be enlarged, our convictions deepened, and we shall find that every event of Providence and every command of God contribute to "our good always." 2. *It will be for our righteousness* (ver. 25). Just as loyal obedience secured to Israel their standing and inheritance, so Christians can only justify their claims and position as God's people by holy life. They are God's peculiar people, redeemed to serve Him and to train future generations in their holy faith. Just as youth are embued with righteousness and truth, and posterity taught the will and works of God, will the Christian church and the nation have within themselves the principle of perpetuation and the security of natural life and religious position. "That they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them."

#### A WONDERFUL HISTORY.—Verses 21–23.

Israel's history from first to last is a process of moral education. In its gradual progress, its divine symbols and its spiritual design, we see divine purpose comprehend in the good of the nation and the redemption of the world. In these words we have two or three remarkable epochs or displays filled with moral instruction.

**I. The Great Deliverance.** "The Lord brought us out of Egypt." For

generations Israel had been oppressed and held in bondage most bitter. But in "the self-same day" of promise, they were rescued without delay. Slavery ended, task-masters gone and liberty gained! Salvation most complete and joy unspeakable. All escaped. Promises and deliverance in Christ to those in bondage of sin and death. He gives life, liberty, joy and glory.

**II. The wonderful way in which it was accomplished.** 1. *By Divine might.* "With a mighty hand." Pharaoh could not resist the omnipotence of God. The "strong man armed" can only "keep his palace" until "the stronger than he cometh." 2. *By marvellous deeds.* "Signs and wonders, great and sore." Most alarming were the judgments of God upon Egypt. God touched the support of life and the objects of worship—annoyed with pain and disease—turned the wealthy land into a wilderness. Then came the dark shadow and finally the stroke of death itself upon "the chief of all their strength." Judgments upon sin may be light at first, but if disregarded will destroy in the end the wicked treasure, "wrath against the day of wrath," "because of the blindness (*hardness*) of their hearts" (Eph. iv. 18).

**III. The Gracious Design.** "To give us the land." Canaan, acquired, not by valour and human skill, a gift of God. "To give us." Patriarchs had been sojourners and strangers there; now descendants in full possession. 1. *An inheritance promised* "which he swore unto our fathers." The covenant 400 years before now to be established; God never forgets. "Never think that God's delays are God's denials. Hold on; hold fast; hold out." (*Buffon*). With Him a thousand years as one day (Ps. xc. 4). 2. *An inheritance into which they were guided.* "He brought us out, that He might bring us in." Canaan not only offered, but Israel helped to get it. The way long, the dangers great, but the Angel of the Covenant never forsook them. God will guide us by the written word and the Holy Spirit if we follow Him. "I will instruct thee."

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Vers. 20–21. Notice—1. Divine Institutions have meaning and design. 2. Our duty to enquire about them. 3. Children especially should be encouraged to question, etc. A Persian philosopher was asked by what method he had acquired so much knowledge, answered, "By not being prevented by shame from asking questions when I am ignorant."

Ver. 20. *The Children's Question.* 1. Children to be encouraged to seek knowledge concerning the Bible and the Church. 2. Patiently and wisely explain, doctrines, duties and privileges. 3. Early teach children to acknowledge God and refer deliverances and all other blessings to Him. 4. Believe that the Holy Spirit will impress youthful hearts with what they see and hear in God's house. *The School in the Family*, pupils, teachers, lessons

to be learned, and benefit of practising them.

Vers. 24–25. *God's commands, our life and righteousness.* 1. Israel to be a separated people (ver. 23). 2. Their continued existence depended upon obedience to God (ver. 24). 3. In this continued existence would be the justification of their character and position (ver. 25). "Every Israelite who yielded an external obedience to the Mosaic law was termed *righteous*, and had a claim in virtue of that obedience, to the land of Canaan; so that doing these things, he lived by them (Lev. xviii. 5; Deut. v. 33). The import of the statement in these verses, then, is that a faithful observance of "all these commandments" should constitute their title to the promised blessings of the covenant." —*Jamieson*.



## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1-3. *Fear.* This fear of God is the foundation of religion; for the great support of virtue among men is the sense upon their minds of a supreme Governor and Judge of the universe, who will finally and effectually reward what is in itself essentially worthy of reward, and punishment what is worthy of punishment. Consequently fear brings us into subjection to God's authority and enforces the practice of duty; for the fear of the Lord is to depart from evil. (*Duty of Man*) *Love.* Our affections are drawn to an attractive object as naturally as iron is charmed by loadstone. God made us to love; and when brought near to such an object our feelings intertwine themselves around it, as the soft and pliant tendrils of the vine do around the support it clothes with leaves, and hangs with purple clusters. Such analogy is there between the laws of mind and matter.—*Dr. Guthrie.*

Ver. 4-5. *One Lord.* We believe God to be one, so we believe Him to be in such manner one, that there cannot possibly be another, for all things must derive their being from Him, and whatsoever being has its existence from another cannot be God, but must be a creature. This unity of God is of universal obligation to be believed that we may be fixed as to the object of our worship, and place our religious adoration there only, where it is due; and also that we may give Him that honour, which is due to Him alone; part whereof is, that we have no other Gods but one, in him only must we trust and love with all our hearts, because He only is infinite goodness, beauty and glory.

Vers. 6-9. *Write.* It is now customary among the Arabs, and the Oriental nations, to write passages of the Koran, and other moral sentences, on the gates of cities, walls, and doorposts.—*Dr. Boothroyd.*

*Teach.* It was the godly practice of the patriarchs to instruct their

children concerning the creation of the world, transgression of man, destruction of the old world, God's providence, the Messiah to be revealed, and the like. The parents' mouths were large books, in which their children did read the noble acts of the Lord. Philip was glad that Alexander was born whilst Aristotle lived, that he might be instructed by Aristotle in philosophy. It is no mean mercy that thy children are born in the days of the Gospel, a land of light, where they may be instructed in Christianity.—*Geo. Swinnock.*

Vers. 10-12. *Forget.* Prosperity is a more refined and severe test of character than adversity, as one hour of summer sunshine produces greater corruption than the longest winter day.—*Eliza Cook.*

Vers. 12-15. *Forget God.* Men who put their supreme idea of life in self-indulgence, cannot understand what God means, who makes self-exertion, in Himself, in angelic powers, in all His creatures, the test of real being. If men are seeking to be supine, to have infinite enjoyment without earning it, and God is determined they shall be stirred up by storms of hope and fear, pain and ease, in order that they may grow and develop, of course they cannot understand Him or His administration. The prizes in this world are placed where those men shall get them who by development, by opening and educating their powers, seek them.—*Beecher.*

Vers. 14-16. *Tempt.* Although God cannot be tempted with evil, he may justly be said to be tempted, whensoever men, by being dissatisfied with His dealings, virtually ask that He will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial with their feelings. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of Providence; suppose him to murmur and repine at what the Almighty allots

him to do or to bear, is he not to be charged with provoking God to change His purposes? and what is this if it be not "tempting" God—a striving to induce Him to swerve from His plans, though every one of these plans has been settled by infinite wisdom. In short, unbelief of every kind and degree may be said to be a tempting of God; for not to believe on the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to tempt him to give more than He has already given—offering our possible assent, if proof were increased, as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed.—*H. Melvill.*

Vers. 20–25. *What mean the testimonies?* The mother of a family was married to an infidel, who made a jest of religion in presence of his own children; yet she succeeded in bringing them all up in the fear of the Lord. I one day asked her how she

preserved them from the influence of a father whose sentiments were so openly opposed to her own? She answered: "Because to the authority of a father I did not oppose the authority of a mother, but that of God. From earliest years my children have always seen the Bible upon the table. This Holy Book has constituted the whole of their religious instruction. I was silent that I might allow it to speak. Did they propose a question; did they commit any fault; did they perform any good action; I opened the Bible, and the Bible answered, reprov'd or encouraged them. The constant reading of the Scriptures has alone wrought the prodigy which surprises you" (*A. Monod*). "Young man, attend to the voice of one who possesses certain degree of fame in the world," said Dr. Samuel Johnson, "and who will shortly appear before his Maker—read the Bible every day of your life."

## CHAPTER VII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Israel is forwarned against the idolatry of the people whose country they were about to enter (*cf.* vi. 14). The nations were more powerful than Israel, but God would deliver them.

2. They must be destroyed, devoted to destruction as accursed, put under the ban. Lev. xxvii. 28. No covenant must be made, nor alliances formed with them lest their children should be seduced.

4. From following, *lit.* from *behind me* (Jehovah) *i.e.*, entice to other gods.

5. Deal. All appendages of idolatry to be destroyed. Ex. xxxiv. 13; xxiii. 24. Groves, enclosures of trees. Ashtoreth, a wooden pillar, very high and firmly fixed in the ground (*cf.* Jud. vi. 25–27; chap. xvi. 21), a female god (Ashtarte) companion of Baal.

6. Holy consecrated to God and not to be lost through idolatry. Special. *lit.* a people of property to God, 1 Chron. xxix. 3; Eccl. ii. 8; Tit. ii. 14. Above, out of all people.

7. This selection, not through numerical strength; but

8. Through the covenant of love (chap. iv. 37). This led to deliverance from Egypt.

9–12. By this Israel were to know that God was faithful in showing mercy to those that love Him and repaying, *i.e.*, punishing enemies to their face, *i.e.*, whilst still living; in their presence, in their own sight; or perhaps in their proper persons, Ex. xxxiii. 14. *see 142*

11. This display of God's faithfulness should teach them to keep His statutes.

12. As a consequence of observance God's favour would be seen in blessing the fruit of the womb, increase of flocks and herds, *cf.* Ex. xxiii. 25.

15. In preservation from virulent sickness of all kinds (Ex. xv. 26) and especially all the evil diseases of Egypt.

16. Consume, *lit.*, devour as food, *snare, i.e.*, incentive to idolatry, Ps. cvi. 36.

17, 18. If they felt unable to meet with these powerful nations, they must remember Egypt, with its *temptations, signs*, and wonders (*cf.* chap. iv. 34; vi. 22). God would do the same to the Canaanites, and

20. Send hornets against them; for God was mighty and terrible to do this.

21, 22. Gradually would they be put out (*plucked off*), lest beasts should increase if dead bodies were left on the ground (*cf.* Ex. xxiii. 29, 30).

24. To stand, *lit.*, to put oneself in the face of a person, to withstand, Lev. xiv. 43.

25, 26. Idols to be destroyed, gold and silver which overlaid them, to be burned. *Snares*, *cf.* Jud. viii. 27, lest they should fall under the curse, to which all idolatrous objects were devoted (Josh. vii).

### FORBIDDEN INTERCOURSE.—*Verses 1-5.*

Israel were about to possess Canaan, to go into danger and temptation. Moses forewarns them against toleration of idolatry. They must have no intercourse with these nations, be entirely separated from them, and by God's help utterly exterminate them.

**I. No toleration of them.** "Nor show mercy unto them." What we tolerate we begin to pity and love. Evils most repulsive at first become attractive afterwards. Hence we must avoid the very appearance of evil. In obedience to God, rid ourselves of every danger, though dear as a right hand or a right eye.

**II. Entire separation from them.** The command is stringent and oft repeated. 1. *In social intercourse.* "Thou shalt make no covenant with them," (ver. 2). *Treaties* were forbidden with Canaanites so gross in idolatry and infamous in custom and lust. *Marriages* were forbidden. "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them." If a covenant was made with the people they would participate in idolatrous feasts, intermarry, join in worship, and be seduced into idolatry. The examples of Solomon and others in subsequent history prove the necessity and importance of this policy. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Life's dearest ties are to be regulated by God's will. We are to marry in the Lord. In character, custom and life, be "not conformed to this world." 2. *In religious worship.* They were not to bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works (Ex. xxiii. 24; xxxiv. 13). At first Israel were commanded to "quite break down their images;" then, after they had displayed idolatrous leanings they were to destroy "altars and groves," which would lead to the worship of the gods if retained. The entire apparatus of idol worship must be destroyed and forgotten (ver. 5).

**III. Complete extermination of them.** "Thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them." Nations, like individuals may become incorrigible and hopeless in their moral condition. Iniquities often call for Divine interposition. The Canaanites defiled the land with their abominations (Lev. xviii. 6, 23), and God as Sovereign Disposer employed what agency He pleased to dispossess them. Let us take warning, remove everything that offends God and perpetuates idolatry. "Pull down the nests, and the rooks will disappear" was the maxim of Knox, this is the wisest policy, the only security from God's anger. Drive from the heart, uproot and destroy in the world, every sinful custom; that the worship



of God may be established and every abomination stamped out, "lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee."

# DESIGN OF ISRAEL'S EXALTATION.—Verses 4-6.

They were to destroy the nations, because their existence, character and position were concerned. They were selected by God to be a holy and special people. This great honour and high privilege they were to keep and not cast away. Hence they were chosen and blessed with inheritance.

**1. To preserve religious worship.** "For they will turn away thy son from following Me." To preserve their national existence all corrupting influences must be put away; for "sin is a reproach (disgrace) to any people" (Prov. xiv, 34.) To keep their national faith, idolatry with all its monuments must be utterly exterminated. The land must be purged, every trace of impurity swept away, and the place consecrated to God and pure worship. Christians are called out of the world, to maintain conflict with its evils, to win and keep it for the habitation of God and His Spirit.

**II. To maintain a special character.** Israel was chosen to take a special place, to be "a peculiar people," historically and spiritually, among the nations of the earth. It was needful therefore to elevate and preserve them by moral law, wonderful providence, and special policy. **1. As a holy people.** "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God." Holy by special covenant, and should be holy in personal character and conduct, separation from the world involves watchful care and constant dedication to God. Israelites were to be near to God as priests of other nations thought themselves to be. Christians are entitled to draw nigh and offer to God their gifts and allegiance. "Ye shall be unto Me a Kingdom of priests and a Holy nation (Ex. xix 6.) **2. As special witnesses for God.** "A special people unto himself, for His glory, truth, and use." Their value was not in themselves, but in their position, virtues, and design. A nation is not to be estimated according to its wealth and ascendancy, but according to its moral worth and righteous deeds. What Israel was designed to be, Christians are now. "Ye are My witnesses saith the Lord," to testify to His existence, mercy, and purpose. "This people have I formed for Myself; they show forth My praise" (*virtues*) Is. xliii. 21; "the praises (*virtues*) of Him that hath so called you" (1 Peter ii. 9).

# THE CHOSEN PEOPLE.—Verses 6-8.

Moses is here referring to the ground or motive from which the election of Israel was originally made. Though it might have seemed suitable that the God of the universe should choose to Himself the mightiest nation of any, yet God had not so acted. He chose to Himself Israel, when as yet but a single family, or rather a single person, Abraham; though there were already numerous nations and powerful kingdoms in the earth.—*Sp. Com.*

**I. The reason for the choice.** God has always reasons, though not always assigned for what He does. They are given here negatively and positively. **1. Not numerical strength.** "For ye were the fewest of all people." They were but a handful of people till after the death of Joseph. Nations of the East were great, and populations enormous; but God's choice depends not on size or appearance. **2. Not moral worth.** They were no better than other people

though they prided themselves in virtue and calling, and were taught by rabbis that they were holy above all nations, they often pursued perverse and unworthy conduct. God derived no advantage from them. They were "a stiff-necked and rebellious people." Christians are not chosen on the ground of merit, foreseen repentance and faith, but "because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people." 3. *But from free grace. (a) Pure love.* He loved them because He would love them. A simple, foolish reason in the opinion of men. We love when there is something loveable in the person loved. Our love depends upon excitement without. God's love is free, sovereign, and in spite of everything unworthy. *(b) Divine faithfulness.* "He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers." God was a debtor to them on account of His promise, not through their conduct—a promise which He would perform, notwithstanding their sinfulness. "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He swore to our father Abraham."

**II. The manifestation of the choice.** The purpose was formed, the choice made, but had to be carried out and manifest in Israel's history. 1. *In their wonderful deliverance.* "From the hand of Pharaoh, King of Egypt." "Let my people go" was the demand. They could not serve God in Egyptian bondage. Only when they were free was it seen that they were God's inheritance and choice. 2. *In their holy character.* If holy, they were to evince it by holy life and make their calling and election sure by separation from idolatry and consecration to God. 3. *By hearty co-operation with God.* "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord" (ver. 6), therefore work with Him in destroying His enemies and fulfilling His purpose. God's purpose does not interfere with our responsibility, duty, and use of means.

**III. The design of the choice.** The motives which led to the election and redemption of Israel were beneficial to themselves and illustrative of God's wisdom and glory. They were chosen to be holy and could only fulfil their mission by obedience to God. External separation must lead to spiritual devotion. They were made the depositories of God's will. In their sacred rites and institutions, in their selection and history, God displayed His grace and prepared the world for His truth. "Neither the Egyptians, with all their wisdom," says *Tholuck*, "nor the imaginative Indians, nor the vain and speculative Greeks, nor the haughty Romans could have received a revelation, or have been employed in this work without marring it." "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure."

#### LESSONS FROM THE PAST.—*Verses 8-11.*

Israel were constantly reminded of the wonders of God in the past deeds to which they owed their national existence, and which were fitted as distinct manifestations of love to impress their minds and incite to obedience. Solemn are the lessons taught by their history. We may live in the past and not only discern the mind of the philosopher, historian, and politician, but the mind of God.

**I. The Grace of God to distinguish men.** Israel were distinguished and blessed above others by divine love. Privileges and personal gifts, honours and distinctions are to be traced to sovereign grace and not human merit. "For who maketh thee to differ (distinguisheth thee) (1 Cor. iv. 7) "By the grace of God I am what I am."

**II. The Power of God to deliver men.** "Redeemed you out of the house of bondmen." Israel were set free, guided and settled in the land, by a strong hand. This hand is not shortened, but delivers in sickness, dangers and trouble. No enemy, bondage, or chains, can retain God's people. "Who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver."

**III. The faithfulness of God to encourage men.** "Because he would keep the oath which he had sworn." God will never disregard or forget His word. The promise may be set at naught, fulfilment long delayed, and His people severely tried; but the oath is taken and will be verified. He is the God of Amen, and we may ever trust Him. His veracity is written in miracle, tender forbearance, and covenant mercy. "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the Son of Man that He should repent" (Num. xxiii. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 29; 2 Tim. ii. 13.)

**IV. The providence of God to warn men.** Providence is the school of life in which we discern God and His purpose. Its relations to men are personal, and its lessons various. We have—1. *A lesson of mercy.* "He keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him." God's mercy infinitely transcends His righteous anger, and is shown to "a thousand generations." To enjoy this mercy we must love God and "keep his commandments." 2. *A lesson of justice.* "Repayeth them that hate Him." There is repayment or retribution in the government of God. The sinner cannot escape justice and sin go unpunished. This repayment is (a) *personal* "to his face." The sinner himself will see and feel that he is smitten of God (Job xxxiv. 11). "I am visited of God," cried a dying man. (b) *Open* "to his face," may mean openly, manifestly, discerned by others to warn them. (c) *Sudden.* "He will not be slack." Delay is not forgetfulness or winking at sin, but given to induce repentance. (d) *Severe* "to destroy." God's patience may be provoked, the day of grace may be lost, and vengeance may fall upon men suddenly, and that without remedy. 3. *A lesson of instruction.* "Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments." If God thus deals with men, rewards them according to their works, take heed, be warned against rebellion and apostacy, and keep "His statutes." "Behold the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

"For human weal, heaven husbands all events."—*Young.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *Gaining the inheritance.*  
1. By Divine guidance. "The Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land." All inheritance, honour and position through God's blessing. 2. By earnest co-operation with God. Israel must follow, "thou goest;" must fight, "cast out." Then God would deliver them, and "they would utterly destroy them." We must work with God to enter any position and succeed in any pursuit.

*struction.* 1. The people destroyed; an act which can only be reconciled with the Divine character, except on the assumption, that the gross idolatry and enormous wickedness of the Canaanites left no hope of repentance and amendment. 2. The monuments of idolatry destroyed. The Gods were deemed to be vanquished with the people whom they could no longer defend. There must be no rival with God in the human heart, in the Christian church, or in the world. All must be consecrated to Him.

Vers. 2-5. *Israel ministers of de-*



Vers. 4-6. *Divine reasons for severity.* 1. Human wickedness. Canaanites had filled up the measure of their iniquity. 2. The good of His people. Preserving their existence, by keeping them from danger; maintaining their holy character and position by removing snares to evil.

Vers. 6-8. *A special people.* 1. In the impress of their character. "Thou art an holy people." 2. In the privileges which they possessed. To whom pertaineth the adoption," etc. (Rom. ix. iv). 3. In the prodigies by which they were defended. What safeguards and helps from God?

Ver. 9. *The faithful God.* The God of Amen (Ps. xxxi. 6). "The

Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev iii. 14) that "will not suffer His faithfulness to fail, nor alter the thing that is gone out of His lips" (Ps. lxxxix. 33), all His precepts, predictions, promises, menaces, being the issue of a most faithful and righteous will, void of the least insincerity or falsehood (1 Kings viii. 24). Neither could any day or age produce one instance to the contrary.—*Trapp.*

Vers. 7-11. *Important truths.* Election (ver. 7). Redemption (ver. 8). Grace (ver. 9). Justice (ver. 11). Law (ver. 11). *God revealed in deeds.* Deeds of wonder (ver. 8). Deeds of love (ver. 7). Deeds of faithfulness and mercy (ver. 9), and deeds of righteousness (ver. 10).

### THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE.—*Verses 12-16.*

As there was retribution for disobedience, so there would be rewards for obedience. Israel was God's servant, and must render to their Ruler His just rights. "If ye hearken to these judgments." If they would observe and keep them, great would be their prosperity, temporally and spiritually.

**I. The source of these blessings.** "He will love thee and bless thee." Love is first, and love is last. God begins in love to us, and we should return love and obedience to Him (1 John iv. 10; John xiv. 21). In mercy "He sware unto thy fathers," and in mercy he kept the oath. Change is impossible with Him, and fail He never can. History testifies to God's love. His purpose to bless in Christ, like a thread of gold, runs through all ages.

**II. The extent of these blessings.** Prosperity would abound in all departments of personal, domestic, and religious life. 1. *Temporal prosperity would be abundant.* This is an object of legitimate desire, and held out as the promise of loyal obedience. (a) *Freedom from personal sickness.* "The Lord will take away from thee all sickness" (ver. 15). Sickness often results from sin, and might be overcome or prevented by a sober, godly life. Plagues and pestilence are Divine scourges for neglect of natural and spiritual laws. If Israel would walk in God's ways, He would miraculously preserve them. The special "diseases of Egypt," which, notwithstanding its even temperature and mildness, are indigenous and malignant, would not touch them. Let us thank God for healthy climate, but remember that only regard for physical and moral law will give health and happiness. (b) *Increase of womb.* "He will also bless the fruit of thy womb" (ver. 13). God would remember His promise to multiply them as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea. (c) *Increase of cattle* (ver. 13). Nothing should be barren among them (ver. 14). Abortions, untimely births and barrenness in excess were considered signs of God's anger, and special sacrifices were offered to prevent them. (d) *Increase of fruit.* Land would yield its increase. Corn and wine would be plentiful (*cf.* Lev. xxvi. 3-5, 9, 10; Ex. xxiii. 25, 26; Ps. cvii. 38). 2. *Spiritual prosperity would be great.* "Thou shalt be

blest above all people" (ver. 14). The mercy of ver. 12 means special favour. Whatever results from natural laws is bestowed by the Lawgiver. The blessings of bodily health, family increase, fruitful lands, and productive flocks, are modes of displaying God's goodness, and should prompt to faithful service. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."

III. The conditions on which these blessings are given. "If ye hearken to these judgments" (ver. 12). What a frail, feeble, and uncertain condition! some would say. But such are the terms of an all-wise God. He is faithful—can we be? Not of ourselves, only by his grace and good spirit. If Canaan had depended on the merit and valour of Israel, they could not have entered it. They obeyed God and gained the land. We cannot secure heaven and Divine favour, only by faith in Christ and obedience to His word. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

#### ENCOURAGEMENT IN DUTY.—*Verses 16-21.*

With the thought that Israel would be strong and vigorous, by obedience to God, "Moses reverts with emphasis to the command to root out the Canaanites without reserve, and not to serve their gods, because they would be a snare to them (*cf.* Ex. x. 7); and then in vers. 17-26 he carries out still further the promise in Ex. xxiii. 27-30, of the successful subjugation of the people through the assistance of the Lord, and sweeps away all the objections that a weak faith might raise to the execution of the divine command."—*Keil*.

I. The enforcement of duty. "Thou shalt consume all the people," ver. 16. They were utterly to extirpate them from the land, without the least pity for their persons or regard to their religion. We are not to consult our feelings but our duty; not to wait for more knowledge but to act on what we have. "To wait for God's performance," says Bishop Hall, "and do nothing, is to abuse that Divine Providence which will always so work as not to allow us to remain in activity."

II. Fear in undertaking duty. "Thou shalt not be afraid of them (ver. 18). When God commands we hesitate, excuse or delay. "Sloth in conclusion proves laborious," says Bacon. Fear springs.—1. *From overpowering numbers.* "These nations are more than I." Seven nations to supplant. "How can I dispossess them?" When we look at self and forget God we magnify dangers. "The soldier wastes his strength who fights with shadows." "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." 2. *From weakness of heart.* "If thou say in thine heart." If the heart gives way, all strength is gone physically and spiritually. Weapons and numbers avail not without heart. If we forget God we shall lose courage and be afraid. "I will send a faintness into their hearts, and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them" (Lev. xxvi. 27-36.) 3. *From lack of faith in God.* God will help and maintain the right; why fear? Trust in Him, and His strength becomes yours. "All things are possible to him that believes."

"Our doubts are traitors;  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt it."—*Shakespeare*.

III. Reasons for encouragement in the performance of duty. The Bible seeks to impress the minds of God's people most strongly with a sense of boldness, faith and courage. God prepares them for meeting and overcoming

anticipated evils. Many are the motives to drive away fear. 1. *The exploits of God in the past.* Remember, and “*well* remember, what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh” (ver. 18). The sublime deeds of Jehovah, the grandeurs of history must never, whatever else may be forgotten. What God has done he can do again. He can never change. Omnipotence is never exhausted. It is no strange thing for God to do wonders. He has always done them, hence ground for confidence. “So shall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.” 2. *The help of God in the present.* “The Lord thy God is among you.” Faith can discover an invisible helper more than a match for all against us. “How many do you count me to be?” said an ancient general to his soldiers, despondingly asking, “How many are coming against us?” “A mighty God and terrible.” 3. *The providence of God in their favour.* Napoleon said providence was with the strongest battalion, but “God and one man are in the majority” very often. Israel were the fewest, yet had to destroy the strongest peoples. (a.) *God would be for Israel, but against their foes* (ver. 15). Not one could stand their onslaught. The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.” (b.) *The hornet was their ally.* “Thy God will send the hornet among them” (ver. 20). God musters many forces for his work. Locusts, flies, and hornets, are no insignificant helpers in the ranks of Jehovah. Insects have swarmed and swept mighty armies before them. Thus does God encourage. Wonders in the past and promises for the present; creatures great and little prove divine power to conquer. This energy the Gospel contains to-day. Banish guilty fears, sloth and forgetfulness of God. “Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you.”

#### THE ALMIGHTY HELPER.—Verse 21.

This description of God is a terror to sinners, but an encouragement to Christians. His mighty presence is—1. *Unmerited.* The aid we get from earthly friends is often a reciprocity of kindness—a discharge of obligation. But our goodness extends not to God. We have done nothing to deserve help. 2. *Unexpected.* In most extreme danger and when most unlikely, comes deliverance. “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” The place of fear and sorrow, becomes one of joy and triumph. 3. *Singular.* God’s methods are peculiar to himself. Events which appear to combine to work our ruin, bring our salvation. In the deliverance from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan God was terrible to his enemies. 4. *Timely.* We think He has forgotten or forsaken us if He appears not when we wish. But He knows better than we do when it is time for Him to work. “Too late,” can never be said of His mercy “A very present help in trouble.” 5. *All-sufficient.* Earthly friends fail. God is always among us, “a mighty God and terrible.” He conquers most formidable foes, rescues from the greatest dangers.” “The Lord your God is a God of gods and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and terrible.”

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 12. 1. *The command.* Judgments possessed, heard, and kept. The word must be known and practised. “If a scholar have his rules laid before him, and he forget them as fast as he read them, he will never

learn,” says T. Watson. 2. *The promise.* “If” we do our part God will do His. Blessings seem to be suspended on our obedience. “Prove me herewith.”



Ver. 13. *Triple blessings.* "Love thee, bless thee, and multiply thee."

Vers. 13, 14. *Religion and Material Prosperity.* 1. An indication of its nature (Matt. vi. 33; 1 Tim. iv. 8.) 2. An argument for its reception (Deut. xxviii. 5-8.) 3. A proof of wisdom and goodness in its author.

Ver. 16. *Extirpation.* 1. Com-manded and can be done. 2. Needful and must be done, to secure their own safety, religion, and the favour of God. 3. If left undone, "that will be a snare to thee."

Vers. 17-19. *Anticipated fears.* 1. *Natural.* How apt to meet troubles before they come! What shall I do?" "How can I get through?" and "what will become of me?" are common questions. 2. *Weakening.* Nothing more disheartens than looking within ourselves, and measuring God by ourselves. "Wonderful is the case of boldness in civil business. What first? boldness. What second and third? boldness" (*Bacon*). 3. *Groundless.* "God sometimes seems to say to us," says Cecil, "if within and without, you have ever so much cause for despondency, yet do not limit *Me*." "With us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles."

Vers. 18, 19. *Remember.* A good memory is very helpful and useful. 1. It is a great means of *knowledge*, for what signifies your reading or hearing, if you remember nothing. 2. It is a means of *faith* (1 Cor. xv. 2.) 3. It is a means of *comfort*. If a poor Christian in distress could remember God's promises they would inspire him with new life; but when they are forgotten, his spirits sink. 4. It is a means of *thankfulness*. 5. It is a means of *hope*; for "experience worketh hope" (Rom. v. 4), and the memory is the storehouse of experience. 6. It is a means of *repentance*; for how can we repent or mourn for what we have forgotten? 7. It is a means of *usefulness*. When one spark of grace is truly kindled in the heart, it will quickly endeavour to heat others also.—*R. Steele*.

Ver. 21. *Thy God.* Jehovah, maker of worlds, but *the God* only of His people. Thy God by purpose, covenant, promise, and performance. *Among you* the centre of all knowledge, trust, devotion and help. He sees and sustains, defends and comforts. Let us extol his power by which He works deliverance! "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty." *God's presence and power*, 1. A source of hope in fear. 2. Of help in weakness. 3. Of guidance in perplexity. 4. Of triumph in conflict.

### THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN.—*Verses 16-24.*

The land was to be taken and the kings utterly destroyed. But the specific aid and the specific method are described—

**I. The conquest was most difficult.** So difficult that Israel thought they could not accomplish it. They were few, their enemies many; they were strangers to the country; the Canaanites knew every field of it; they were unskilled in the art and without much experience in the practice of war. "These nations are mightier than I; how can I dispossess them?" *We* cannot, but God never sends us on warfare at our own charge. To be valourous soldiers we must banish distrust.

**II. The conquest was supernaturally gained.** God had helped them in every case and thus far brought them safely. He could yet display all mighty power and work "signs and wonders." His presence and providence are with us, if we only obey and work with Him." Thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction (ver. 23).

**III. The conquest was gradual.** "Little by little; thou mayest not consume them at once." 1. *This was an evidence of kindness to Israel.* Wild animals might increase too much if the land was suddenly depopulated and become a source of danger and trouble to Israel "lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee." 2. *This is a law of Divine grace.* "Little by little" do we conquer sin and self, the world and its temptations. Little by little do we gain men for Christ and succeed in Christian effort. 3. *This is a law of God's providence.* Great undertakings demand patient thought; are frequently interrupted and only succeed by gradual progress and successive order. Thus does God teach "line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."

GOD'S PEOPLE INVINCIBLE.—*Verses 23, 24.*

God had shown that Israel had no need to be afraid. He would help by His presence, power, and providence, until all left and hidden would be destroyed. To inspire them with courage, the promise is repeated and success is pledged. If they will only obey they will conquer. God's people are invincible.

**I. On account of the warfare in which they are engaged.** Israel's mission seemed cruel, but it was the cause of God and for the welfare of humanity. "A good cause gives a stout heart." Christian warfare is a Divine cause. "Fight the good fight of faith."

"Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful."—*Shakespeare.*

**II. On account of the enthusiasm which inspires them.** "There shall no man be able to stand before thee." Cromwell's Ironsides fought for liberty, truth, and God. God would inspire His people with wonderful courage, so that they would not only pursue but overcome. A handful would be more than a match for a regiment. Five of you shall chase an hundred," etc. (Lev. xxvii. 7, 8.)

**III. On account of the leader who commands them.** Great generals make good soldiers. Caesar often restored his rebellious army to obedience, made them attached to his person and devoted to his cause. Christ, "the Captain of our salvation" is merciful, mighty and victorious, never lost, and never will lose a battle. "If God be for us who can be against us" (Rom. viii. 31, 37; Isa. xli, 11).

THE CURSED THING.—*Verses 25, 26.*

The idols of Canaan were devoted to destruction, under the curse of God and if preserved they might entice to sins, therefore Israel were to destroy them by fire with their ornaments and supports.

**I. Idolatry is a cursed thing.** The worship of gods and the worship of gold; all superstitions and sins are abominable things which the Lord hates.

**II. This cursed thing may become a snare.** "Lest thou be snared therein." 1. *By gratifying covetousness.* "Thou shalt not desire the silver or the gold that is on them." God may be served from motives of gain. Gold and silver may tempt and covetous lusts may endanger the soul. 2. *By transforming character like itself.* Man becomes like the object he loves. The love of the world will

make us worldly ; the love of money will make us avaricious. Sin in its gilded and attractive forms must be utterly detested, for loving begets likeness. 3. *By bringing under the curse of God.* Achan "took of the accursed thing ; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel" (Josh. vii. 1-21 ; vi. 17, 18 ; Jud. viii. 27.) We cannot use for our good what God has put under anathema.

III. This snare it is our duty to remove. "Thou shalt utterly abhor it." We are to hate what God hates and forsake what he forbids. 1. We are not to desire but to detest it. 2. Not to bring it into the house but burn it in the fire. Thus are we not only to oppose, but detest and destroy all idolatry and wickedness. The worship of man or reason, of art or mammon must find no place in our hearts and homes. We must avoid the very appearance of evil. Our service must be disinterested and holy. "There shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand."

# HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 23, 24. *Great reverses predicted.* Delivered. Destroyed with a mighty destruction. *Kings* destroyed. Destruction severe and universal. *Name* destroyed. "Thou mayest choose," says Bishop Pilkington, "whether thou wilt be remembered to thy praise or to thy shame." "The name of the wicked shall rot" (Prov. x. 7).

Ver. 25. *Snared.* As the fowler catcheth birds, and the hunter wild beasts in their snares and traps, so shall these Canaanites catch you by their familiarity and commerce, and draw you to participate in their sins and plagues.—*Trapp.*

Vers. 25, 26. Images burned, and nothing kept. 1. To satisfy curiosity. 2. To excite pity. 3. To gratify lust. 4. To lead astray.

*Idol gods.* Made (images graven), adorned (gold and silver on them), upheld (in the house), cursed and uprooted. *Feeling towards them.* Utterly detest—utterly abhor—destroy and burn. Learn—1. That God will not accept divided worship. 2. That in mixing with the world we are in danger of being estranged from God. 3. That when estranged from God, and brought under his curse, the punishment will be severe.

# ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 1-5. *No covenant with them.* Court not the society of worldly persons, but "come out from among them and be separate." If duty calls us there, be with them as physicians, not companions ; as monitors, not friends ; walk as among snares, and as Cecil advises, "transact business with them like a person in a shower of rain, staying no longer than is indispensably necessary."

Vers. 6-8. *Chosen thee.* That separation from other nations in which the holiness of the Jewish nation

chiefly consisted (Ex. xix. 5, 6 ; Num. xxiii. 9 ; Deut. xxvi. 18, 19) was not spiritual, resulting from rectitude of heart and a correspondent deportment, but merely external, derived from certain sacred rites and ceremonies, different from or opposite to those from other nations. The glory of the Divine wisdom, no less than of Divine goodness and grace, was manifested in the choice of the Israelites for the important purposes contemplated by their separation. (*Jamieson*). Judaism was amongst the idolatrous nations of antiquity like an



oasis in a desert, clearly defined and isolated ; separated and enclosed by a rigid moral and ceremonial law.—*Schaff*.

Vers. 8-11. *Covenant and mercy.* The Jewish scheme proceeded on exactly the same principles as the general system of Divine government over the world, with this difference ; that the Supreme Jehovah, the Immediate Sovereign as well as tutelary God of the Hebrew nation, undertook to dispense this as well as every other species of reward and punishment, by an immediate and extraordinary provision, in which justice should be tempered with abundant *mercy*, confining the providential and temporal punishment for the parent's crimes (as in the captivity) to the *third* and *fourth* generation ; while it encouraged virtue and piety, by the assurance of a *reward*, similar in kind, but infinitely superior in degree, and which under the common course of events could not be hoped for ; promising to extend the blessings of parental faith and obedience (as in the case of Abraham), to the *thousandth* generation of those who loved God.—*Graves* on Pent).

Vers. 12-16. *Bless thee.* Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament ; adversity is the blessing of the new (*Bacon*). In the day of good be thou in good. When God gives thee *prosperity*, do thou enjoy it with a cheerful and thankful heart (*Bp. Reynolds*). God's blessing upon our hearts, families and churches.

"My stock lies dead, and no increase  
Doth my dull husbandry improve ;  
O let thy graces without cease  
Drop from above."

*From Spurgeon.*

Ver. 17-22. *Afraid.* Ills that never happened have mostly made men wretched, (*Tupper*.) 1. Most of our difficulties arise from discussing what belongs to God. 2. God does not

reason with us, but replies to our suspicions reasoning by displaying anew the love of His heart and the power of His arm, (*Bonar*).

Ver. 21. *With thee.* When the Crusaders encamped before Jerusalem, a terrible struggle ensued. The Saracens possessed the city, bore down upon them in countless numbers, and it seem as if the Christian army would lose the battle. All at once, we are told that a joyful cry rang through the ranks of the crusaders. "St. James is with us ! He fights on our side." "In the excitement of the conflict, some of them fancied they saw the apostle in the clouds advancing to help them. It gave them new courage. They rushed forward with energy which could not be withstood and the battle was won.

Ver. 22. *Little and little.* Birds build nests straw by straw. "Euripides the Greek tragedian, was very slow in composing his excellent dramas. One day a poetaster met him and began to rally him on his tardiness, adding that he himself had written 100 verses in three days, while Euripides had only written three. "Ah (said Euripides) but there is this difference, your 300 verses perish in three days, while my three will survive 300 years." (*Brewer*.)

Vers. 23-24. *No man able to stand before thee.* Luther's song of confidence "God is our refuge and strength." Let God be thy love and thy fear, and He will be also thy refuge. "The firmest thing in this lower world is a believing soul." (*Leighton*). When Luther was going into the presence of Cardinal Cajetan, to answer for his heretical opinions, one of the Cardinal's underlings, insultingly asked him where he would find a shelter, if his patron, the Elector of Saxony, should desert him ? "Under the shield of heaven," was the bold reply.

## CHAPTER VIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—In addition to the danger of being ensnared by idolatry, after their settlement in Canaan, Israel might fall into pride and forget God in the enjoyment of its products. To guard against this, Moses reviews the past and indicates the Divine purpose in the 40 years' wanderings.

1. Renewed admonition to keep the law.

2. Remember that God's designs may be realised and right effects produced (chap. xiii. 3; 2 Chron. xxxii. 31). *Humble, i.e.*, to bring them by means of distress and privations to depend upon God. *Prove, i.e.*, to test in positions which would reveal their thoughts and hearts.

3. Manna (Ex. xvi. 14, 15), previously unknown to them and their fathers; not only to sustain natural life, but to show that man lives not by *bread* only, but by *every word, lit.*, every outgoing of the mouth of the Lord; not by material bread, but by the fulfilment of God's will (cf. Mat. iv. 4). God sustains life by extraordinary as well as ordinary means.

4. God provided for clothing as well as nourishment. *Waxed, lit.*, did not fall off, waste away, *foot swell*, become soft (chap. lxx., got callous; Neh. ix. 21), which would have been the case if their sandals had not been preserved from wearing out.

5. Thus did God chasten, *lit.*, admonish, educate them as a father his son.

7-9. Israel were to be mindful of this paternal discipline when they entered the good land. We have a contrast between Palestine and Egypt. *Brooks*, streams, mountain torrents, and water-courses in valleys; water the chief source of fertility. *Wheat*, cereal fruits specially promised to faithful allegiance (Ps. lxxxi. 16; cxvii. 14). *Vines* covering limestone rocks. *Honey*, a great delicacy.

9. *Stones are iron, i.e.*, ferruginous. *Brass*, not the alloy brass, but the ore of copper. Mines now exhausted or neglected were worked anciently (Job. xxviii. 1-11; 'Is. lx. 17; 1 Chron. xxii. 3).

10-18. Israel in the midst of plenty were to beware of forgetting God.

12. Goodly houses would be strange after moveable tents.

14. Lifted up, like the Pharisee in the temple.

In vers. 14-16 Moses again gives a summary of the dangers of the desert; snakes, scorpions, and drought. Yet Divine goodness brought water out of the hardest stone, and gave manna to humble them, and ultimately to do good at *latter end, i.e.* the settlement of Israel in Canaan—the end and climax of the Mosaic dispensation, to which the sojourn in Egypt, the wandering in the desert, and the arrangements of the law, all led up (*Speak. Com.*).

18. *Wealth*. God gave power to get wealth, to create property (Numb. xxiv. 18), not on account of Israel's merit, but to fulfil His promise *this day*; the oath was confirmed, and Israel had come through the desert to the border of Canaan.

19, 20. To strengthen his admonition, Moses pointed again in conclusion, as in chap. vi. 14 (cf. chap. iv. 25 sqq.), to the destruction which would come upon Israel through apostasy from God (*Keil.*)

## THE RETROSPECT OF LIFE.—Verses 1-6.

The long wandering in the wilderness was designed to teach self-distrust, humility and reliance on God for the necessities of life. God's special providence had blessed them, and without this they could not prosper in Canaan. Hence they are urged to remember the experience of the past to secure obedience in the future.

REMEMBERING THE WAY.—*Verse 2.*

**I. The way we are called to remember** is “*all the way*,” etc. But those things are to be most remembered which are more immediately connected with heaven, as—1. The means which brought us into the way : 2. The afflictions with which we have been visited since we have been walking in the path of life : 3. Our mercies : 4. Our sins.

**II. To be beneficial the remembrance must** be accompanied by a lively conviction of the overruling providences of God in all that has happened to us. 1. They are intended to humble us : 2. To prove us : 3. To teach the insufficiency of earthly things to make us happy.

**III. Besides these immediate ends they answer**—1. To confirm our faith in the Bible : 2. To increase our knowledge of ourselves : 3. To strengthen our confidence in God.—*C. Bradley.*

THE RETROSPECT OF LIFE.—*Verses 1-6.*

**1. Life is a journey.** “All the way.” It is a most solemn and eventful way. We are strangers and pilgrims on earth as our fathers were. “You have not passed this way before.” 1. *Under Divine guidance.* “The Lord thy God led thee.” Moses and Aaron, priests and counsellors, were with Israel, but they prayed “let thy presence go with us” (Ex xxxiii. 14, 17). Many looked upon Moses alone, God’s guidance was needful. The Christian has a divine and omnipotent leader. “So I am with you,” Sad for those who journey without God. 2. *Displaying divine goodness.* From beginning to end life is filled with tokens of divine favours. (a) *In redeeming it from destruction* as Israel were delivered from Egypt. Dangers seen and unseen, enemies in every period and stage—perils, personal, social, and peculiar, have been overcome. (b) *In sustaining it in time of need.* Food, clothing, and shelter have been given. Manna never ceased ; supplies came every day. Decay made no progress, and God provided for every emergency. “God will pay all our expenses to heaven,” says an old writer. 3. *Under divine discipline.* “To prove thee.” Hardships, trials, and changes, are ways by which God discovers what is in our hearts. The bitter and sweet are mixed together in heavenly discipline, give life a moral value and test faith, disposition and character. 4. *Directed to a special end.* There is *direction*, dark and perplexing as events may be. We train and educate our children for ultimate ends. God disciplines his people for special work, special enjoyment, and “good at the latter end.” The moral end to prove us, and the real end eternal rest.

**II. The journey of life should be remembered.** “Thou shalt remember all the way.” Life’s meaning can only be understood by its retrospect and remembrance. We cannot discern God’s purpose in the midst of its movement and events. But when raised to some mount, or brought to some crisis, then we calmly review the past and learn its lessons. 1. *In its marked duration.* “These forty years” in the wilderness. Long or short our days are limited. The longest life brief regarded in the light of eternity. Brief contrasted with the age of the world and the duration of God ! But filled with human folly and divine mercy ! 2. *In its special dangers.* “In the wilderness,” a land of dearth, scorpions and fiery serpents, verse 15. “A land of deserts and of pits ; through a land of drought and of the shadow of death ; through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt” (Jer. ii. 6 ; Hos. xiii. 5). 3. *In its peculiar trials.* The Red Sea with its triumphs, Marah with its bitterness,



Rephidim with its murmurs, Sinai with its thunders and the wilderness with its supplies, contests and incidents must never be forgotten. The past records, the wonders of God ; memory must treasure them up to aid faith. "Memory is a fit handmaid for faith. When faith has its seven years of famine, memory like Joseph in Egypt opens her granaries."—(*Spurgeon.*) 4. *In its moral nature.* Life is more than meat which sustains it, greater than natural existence. Man doth not live by bread alone, but by the word, the will of God or what is pleasing to God. God sustained Israel forty years with manna, and Moses forty days and forty nights without bread to show that our well-being depends not upon material things. Our life is nourished by God's will, we should therefore be more anxious to do that will, than become impatient, fretful, and selfish in helping ourselves (*cf.* Matt. iv. 4 ; John vi. 52-55).

**III. The habit of remembering life will be helpful to us.** As an exercise of memory it is useful. Memory may help or hinder according to our tastes and moral condition. We should review the past. 1. *To acquaint us with ourselves.* "Know thyself" is a difficult lesson. We blame the Jews and are guilty ourselves. We measure ourselves with ourselves or others, and think too highly of ourselves. But God knows what is in man, puts us into circumstances which test our character, and which bring out what we have in us, what we have in our hearts, "whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no." 2. *To teach us dependence upon God.* "To humble thee," and uproot all pride and self-sufficiency. "He suffered thee to hunger," that God might be recognised and trusted. What could Israel, what can we do in the wilderness without God. Supplies came not from earth but from heaven. 3. *To excite gratitude to God.* Gratitude cures bad memories. If we forget God's works we have need to learn the art of remembering. "Eaten bread is soon forgotten. Nothing so soon grows stale as a favour" (*Trapp*). Memory quickens the heart and supplies fuel to grateful feeling. 4. *To prompt obedience to God.* "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments," etc. (ver. 6). Without a sense of obligation there can be no real obedience. "Those who forget God's works," says Spurgeon, "are sure to fail in their own." "Thanksgiving is good," observes Matthew Henry, "but thankliving is better." We should make grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness by unreserved dedication to His service. "All the commandments shall ye observe to do."

#### DIVINE DISCIPLINE.—*Verses 5-6.*

The sufferings of Israel were not only chastisements for sin, but trials of obedience ; methods of discovering their unbelief, inconstancy and rebellion. Thus God trained or disciplined them, that they might obey Him.

**I. The nature of this discipline.** In earthly families there must be correction, "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not !" Among God's people there is "a needs be" for this discipline. 1. *It is often severe.* "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Some are heavily afflicted. They suffer in body and mind, in family and business. Dark, indeed are their days, most intense are the flames in which they are put, until their "flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen" (Job xxxiii. 21 ; xiv. 22). 2. *It is always affectionate.* "As a man chasteneth his son"—God never suffers His children to be ruined for want of correction ; whom He loves He chastens, and chastens because He loves. "He rejoiceth over His child to do Him good" (Jer. xxxii. 41). Not as a master beating his slaves, nor a judge condemning criminals ;

"God deals with His servants," says an old writer, "not as a passionate master, but as a compassionate father." The principle which prompts him is not judicial nor retributive, but parental. Hence cried Luther, "Strike on, Lord, strike on, for now I know I am Thy child."

II. The design of this discipline. God has a purpose in view. His strokes are not random strokes. Earthly fathers chastise foolishly, often for their own pleasure and err in their method of discipline (Heb. xii. 5, 6.) "They err at one time in severity, at another in indulgence (1 Sam. iii. 12; Ep. vi. 4), and do not so much chasten as *think* they chasten" (*Bengel*). But God trains for our well-being and never errs in the means to accomplish it. 1. *To give instruction*. "Consider in thine heart." Afflictions are not to be despised, but thought of and felt. Seneca could say "it is inhuman not to feel thine afflictions, and unmanly not to bear them." In this school we are taught the folly of pride, the need of purity and the mercy of God. It throws light into our character and leads to moral decision. God "taught the men of Succoth (made them to know) with "thorns of the wilderness and briars" (Jud. viii. 16). We are made to know much of sin, of Christ, of God, and of the world, through affliction. Luther said there were many of the Psalms that he could never understand till he had been afflicted. Rutherford declared that he had gained a new Bible through the furnace. 2. *To produce obedience*. "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments." Children are wayward, self-willed, and must be preserved from disobedience. Jesus had to "learn obedience by the things which he suffered." "Sufferings, disciplinings" (trainings) is the Greek adage. God melts in the furnace that he may stamp with His image; corrects that we may partake of His holiness. The rod is sent to wean from sin, train to obedience and discipline for heaven. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law."

"Among the choicest of my blessings here,  
Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. I. *Duty to be rightly performed*. 1. Right in its *method*. "Observe to do." 2. Right in its *motive*. From the fear of God. 3. Right in its *scope*. "All the commandments." II. *Duty rightly performed brings enjoyment*. Physical exercise gives health, vigour, and pleasure. Obedience to God gives satisfaction of heart and mind. Israel would (a) live, (b) multiply, and (c) gain the inheritance. "Employment is true enjoyment," says Shakespeare.

*All the commandments*. "All" is but a little word, but of large extent. There are *magnalia legis* and *minutula legis*. Look to both the greater and the lesser things of the law (Matt. xxiii. 23).—*Trapp*.

yourselves thoroughly—store memory wisely—live obediently. *Remembrance of God's commandments*. Consider: I. The duty of remembrance. A positive duty, an obligation upon us, with regard to—1. Earthly things; 2. Heavenly things. II. The benefit resulting from it. These events, which we should remember, were intended to—1. Humble us; 2. Prove us. III. Its comfort: it is all "to do thee good at thy latter end" (*J. J. Day, M.A.*). *The Retrospect*. I. Let us return to the call to remembrance. II. Observe the subject to be reviewed. 1. The place: "the wilderness;" 2. The Conductor: "the Lord thy God;" 3. The passages: "all the way;" 4. The period: "these forty years."—*Jay*.

Vers. 2-4. *Practical religion*. Know

Vers. 5, 6. *Chasteneth*. This is

reckoned here as an high favour. So Job accounts it (chap. vii. 17, 18), and Paul describes it (Heb. xii. 7, 8), and Jeremiah prays for it (chap. x. 24).—*Trapp.*

*Divine chastisement.* Afflictions are—1. Divine in their appointment. 2. Paternal in their character. Inflicted with tender reluctance, deliberate wis-

dom, and with great leniency. [3. Painful in their exercise. 4. Affectionate in their design.

“He nothing does, or suffers to be done,  
But thou would’st do thyself, could’st thou but  
see,  
The end of all events as well as he.”

*Rev. R. Bond.*

### THE GOOD LAND.—*Verses 7-9.*

It is significant that Deuteronomy should abound more than earlier books in praises of the beauty and fertility of Canaan. “Such a topic,” says Dean Graves, “at an earlier period would have increased the murmurings and impatience of the people at being detained in the wilderness; whereas now it encouraged them to encounter with more cheerfulness the opposition they must meet with from the inhabitants of Canaan.”

**I. A good land displaying Divine bounties.** Ancient and modern writers testify to the natural beauty and fertility of Palestine. Most striking features are mentioned first. Water abounds in natural springs, fountains, and in the clouds of heaven. Its cereal, fruits yielded sixty and often an hundred fold (Gen. xxvi. 12; Matt. xiii. 8), and under its hills iron and brass were found. It was a land of plenty and rich variety; displaying Divine goodness in its produce and position “a wealthy place” (Ps. lxxvi. 12). What forethought, wisdom, and affection God displays in causing the earth to furnish us with the necessities of life! Everything to satisfy the eye, promote health, and gratify the taste. But this possession is only a type of spiritual blessings, and a richer inheritance in the land beyond.

**II. A good land in contrast to the wilderness.** Compared with Egypt from whence they came, and with the desert through which they passed, the land was remarkable. Contrasts in life are many and striking—in its different stages, in its beginning and end. Deserts and fruitful fields, poverty and wealth, light and darkness, “are set the one over against the other,” in Divine appointment, wise proportion and benevolent design. “To the end that man should find nothing after him.” Nothing superfluous, defective, or irregular in the review (Ecc. vii. 14). “If a man should take upon himself to review the work after him, and conceive that a greater or less degree of prosperity or adversity would have been better, or that either would have sufficed, without the balance of the other—he only stands before us in all the folly and presumption of fancying himself to be wiser than God. What God has done, he has done best.”—*Bridge.*

**III. A good land for which Israel was prepared.** There was, not only a natural preparation in the physical changes and human cultivation of Canaan, but a moral preparation of the people for their position. The earth is prepared for man, and the world to be the theatre of redemption; but man is trained and disciplined for his inheritance. We are not always fit to receive the things we cry for. Blessings would never be appreciated without a sense of need and adaptation. The wealth of the soul is the wealth of experience; faith confirmed after trial and deliverance. The place of the believer is gained through humility, affliction and discipline, and men are always trained and prepared for their lot in life. Heaven is “a prepared place for a prepared people.” “To bring thee into the place which I have prepared.”



THE PERILS OF PROSPERITY.—*Verses 10-18.*

When Israel entered the good land it would be one of the greatest changes in their history. In the midst of plenty they might forget God, who sustained them in the wilderness, brought them into their possession and lavished his gifts upon them. "Beware thou forget not the Lord thy God."

**I. Prosperity leads to self-indulgence.** "When thou hast eaten and art full." Wealth leads to surfeiting. In abundance men indulge sinful appetites. "Eating and drinking are themselves religious acts, or, at least, *ought* to be so," says Feuerback, "with every mouthful we should think of the God who gave it." God gives bread for necessities, man craves "meat for his lust." (Ps. lxxviii. 18.) Self-indulgence is dangerous as "a knife to thy throat," (Prov. xxiii. 2) and must be avoided lest ruin ensue. "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

**II. Prosperity tends to forgetfulness of God.** Forgetfulness of His providence, gifts and commandments. A sense of divine favours dies in the memory. The mercy of God is only remembered when it is taken away. In the order of nature and in the events of life, God is forgotten, and self or second causes are praised. "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." (Hos. ii. 8.)

**III. Prosperity begets pride of heart.** "Then thine heart be lifted up." Adversity may depress, but prosperity elevates to presumption. It lifts up the mind against God. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Herod are fearful examples. It is not mere aversion from God, but direct resistance to God, against which God places himself in battle array; "God *resisteth* the proud." (James iv. 6.) "They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." (Hos. xiii. 6.)

**IV. Prosperity genders self-glorification.** "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." (ver. 17.) Proud men esteem themselves too highly, demand reverence from their fellow men, and glorify themselves instead of God. Nebuchadnezzar ascribed all the praise to himself in his prosperity. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built," etc. (Dan. iv. 30-32). It is false, unreasonable, and mischievous to say that we gain our wealth and positions. Do not sacrifice to your own nets (Hab. i. 16), "for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." (ver. 18.)

"In pride, in reasoning pride our error lies;  
All quit the sphere, and rush into the skies.  
Pride still is aiming at the blessed abodes;  
Men would be angels, angels would be Gods."—*Pope.*

ARGUMENTS FOR OBEDIENCE.—*Verses 14-18.*

God's purpose was to do Israel good at the latter end. There was no event in their journey separate and independent in itself. There was divine issue in everything. The end in view was to make them humble and obedient. Hence Moses enforces his lesson by a recapitulation of mercies and points out the danger of disobedience.

**I. The past mercies of God should lead to present obedience (ver. 15.)** These are again specified, and should never be forgotten. Deliverance from bondage ; guidance and preservation in danger, want and distress ; bountiful supplies and careful training. Our life wonderfully displays power, mercy, and grace ; and its review should beget profound sense of gratitude and prompt to consecration. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

**II. Our dependence upon God should lead to present obedience.** God gives power to get wealth and gain success in life (ver. 18.) Israel were perfectly helpless from beginning to end of their history. Supplies in the wilderness came from heaven. "The good land" was a special gift. We can never cease to be dependent upon God, and should, therefore, not attribute prosperity to "the laws of nature," or to our own skill and wisdom. We should seek to please and obey God. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it."

**III. Future destiny should lead to present obedience.** Moses often puts the condition of blessings upon their obedience. In some respect their future was in their own hands. Apostasy would lead to ruin. As God had destroyed "the nations before their face," so they would perish if they "would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord." Loyal obedience would secure length of days, and national glory. Our eternal weal or woe depends upon our conduct and character here. "As all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you ; so shall the Lord bring upon you all the evil things," etc. (Jos. xxiii. 15.)

#### A CAUTION AGAINST FORGETFULNESS OF GOD.—*Verse 11.*

The text, though delivered by Moses thousands of years ago, is addressed to us now ; it contains an *assumption*, an *intimation*, and a *charge*.

**I. Men are liable to forget God.** This is assumed in the text, and needs but little confirmation. All acknowledge it, but to impress it deeply upon our minds, notice the following considerations :—1. *We infer our liability to forget from the mysteriousness of His nature.* Things near that we handle and see are not easily forgotten ; but things remote, unseen and mysterious, are not generally remembered. No man hath seen God ; our ideas of Him are imperfect, and hence we are liable to forget Him. 2. *We infer our liability to forget God from the moral dislike we have to Him.* We easily remember those to whom we are deeply attached, but forget those whom we dislike. Sinners hate God—are contrary in their nature to Him, and are aliens and enemies in their hearts : hence they often forget Him. 3. *We infer our liability to forget God from the facts that fall under our notice.* We need not go among pagans, nor penetrate recesses of licentiousness or haunts of vice. Let each individual examine his own heart. How often we forget God's presence, mercies, and laws. 4. *We infer our liability to forget God, from the testimonies of the Scriptures.* Read Ps. x. 4 ; xiv. 1-3 ; Job xxi. 14, 15 ; Rom. i. 28.

**II. Forgetfulness of God is an evil against which we should be peculiarly on our guard.** This is intimated in the text, founded on the following reasons :—1. *They who forget God must necessarily remain ignorant of Him.*

Ignorance of God is censurable, for man has capacity for knowing God. He is the most worthy object we can know. The Holy Spirit will help us to gain knowledge. But those who forget can never know Him; nothing can be known that is forgotten. 2. *They who forget God must necessarily disobey Him.* God's commandments are founded in justice, goodness, and truth; bind us to hate sin and love holiness; and in keeping them there is great reward. But they who forget God disobey, and disobedience is a great curse (*cf.* Deut. xxviii. 15-20). 3. *They who forget God must necessarily prove ungrateful to Him.* As our *Creator*, we are indebted to Him for bodies wonderfully made; souls exalted in their nature, and adapted for elevated and eternal enjoyments. As our *Benefactor*, He feeds, clothes, and defends us. As our *Saviour*, He gave His Son to die for us, His Spirit to strive with us, and His Gospel to encourage us. This loudly calls for gratitude. But who can be grateful that forgets God? Is not ingratitude a hateful, execrable crime? 4. *They who forget God must necessarily be punished by Him.* Necessarily, for God has threatened, and it is impossible for Him to lie (*cf.* Ps. ix. 17; Jud. iii. 7, 8).

III. Means should be used for the avoidance of this heinous crime. This is the object of the charge;—"Beware that thou forget not." 1. *Serious consideration should be exercised on all things that belong to our peace.* How lamentable the extreme thoughtlessness of men concerning their souls, salvation, and God! Avoid the crime of forgetting by giving yourselves up to serious consideration. "I thought on my ways." (Ps. cxix. 59; Deu. xxxii. 29; 2 Tim. 2-7.) 2. *Fervent and unremitting prayer should be offered up to God for a change of heart.* If not renewed in the spirit of our minds, we shall be habitually liable to forget God. If renewed and a right spirit put within us, we shall love and delight ourselves in God. 3. *We should constantly avoid those things which tend to exclude God from our thoughts.* The expression of the text is emphatic, *Beware*—be wary and suspicious of danger. Shun needless association with sinners who forget God and excite others to forget him. Be not too anxious to increase worldly prosperity, for nothing conduces more to forgetfulness of God than this! What a propensity to forget God when riches increase! 4. *Let us use all the means which tend to turn our thoughts towards God.* Associate with the godly—frequent religious ordinances—read God's holy word—contemplate death, judgment and eternity! In conclusion. 1. Inquire, do we forget God? This may serve as a discriminating mark of moral character. Christians love to think of God—sinners strive to forget him. 2. Exhort those who forget God to consider their folly, ingratitude, and danger.—*Beta.*

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF WORLDLY SUCCESS.—*Verses 18-20.*

1. How worldly success is to be obtained. By strict obedience to God's laws; by this only. *Work* is what He demands, and work is the only condition under which the prize may be won. 2. The nature of the profit we are to look for. Not merely worldly profit. No life so dreary, so deadly as that of the mere millionaire. The joys of the true man's life he cannot taste; the holy fellowships of spiritual being he cannot enter; God stamps him reprobate. There is a vast wealth of faculty in him, "fusting" from want of use. And power unused soon gets acrid, and mordant, and gnaws and wears within. 3. Why we should remember the Lord God. Because—1. It will bring us out at once into the glad sunlight, and will make even our toil lightsome; 2. It will spare us all wearing and crushing anxieties; 3. It will save us the shame and anguish of finding ourselves bankrupt at last and for ever.—*J. B. Brown, B.A.*



## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 7. *Bringeth thee into a good land.* "A blessed issue to a mournful story. Canaan was, indeed, a broad and royal domain for the once enslaved tribes. God, who took them into Egypt, also brought them into the land which flowed with milk and honey, and Egypt was in his purposes *en route* to Canaan. The way to heaven is *viâ* tribulation.

"The path of sorrow and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."  
—*Spurgeon.*

A good land—free from scarceness, void of sorrow, and secure from dangers.

Ver. 10. *Bless the Lord.* Suitable requital, for goodness most constant, for gifts in rich abundance and undeserved.

Ver. 11. *Forget not.* God hates forgetfulness of His blessings. *First*, because He has commanded that we should not forget them. (Deut. iv. 9.) *Secondly*, because forgetfulness is a sign of contempt. *Thirdly*, it is the peculiarity of singular carelessness. *Fourthly*, it springs from unbelief. *Fifthly*, it is the greatest mark of ingratitude.—*Thomas le Blanc.*

Ver. 15. *Flint turned into a fountain.* Supplies from unlikely sources—a type of Divine grace in the hardest heart, and an argument for undeserving fidelity. Mighty streams flow to us in the wilderness. Has our return been commensurate?

Vers. 15, 16. *Divine supplies*—seasonable, plentiful and miraculous,

or *Divine interpositions* in direction, "led thee" protection, and necessities of life. *Manna in the wilderness.* A celebrated event. 1. On account of the *excellence* of the gift. Angel's food." (Ps. lxxviii. 25.) 2. On account of the *rarity* of the gift "which thy fathers knew not." 3. On account of the *source* of the gift "from heaven." 4. On account of the *place* in which it was given "in the wilderness." "God's banquets are never stinted; He gives the best diet and plenty of it. Gospel provisions deserve every praise that we can heap upon them; they are free, full, and pre-eminent; they are of God's preparing, sending and bestowing. Happy pilgrims who in the desert have their meat sent from the Lord's own palace above."—*Spurgeon.*

Ver. 16. *Good at latter end.* 1. Life divided into distinct periods which have beginning and end. 2. God has a purpose in view in the whole of life. 3. This purpose is good. 4. This purpose will only be fully realised at life's end. Canaan and heaven. "The 'latter end' of any one is the time which follows some distinct point in his life, particularly an important epoch-making point, and which may be regarded as the end by contrast, the time before that epoch being considered as the beginning."—*Delitzsch.*

Vers. 19, 20. *The danger of forgetting God.* 1. It leads to idolatry. If true God forgotten, another will be chosen, for we must have a God. 2. It leads to destruction. "Ye shall surely perish."

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 2. *Years.* Life is crowded with pleasures. When there is shadow, it is because there is sunshine not far

off. Its weeds and thorns are known by contrast with surrounding flowers, and though upon many even of the

latter there may be raindrops, those that are without are yet more abounding. There are more smiles in the world than there are tears; there is more love than hate, more constancy than forsaking. Those that murmur the contrary choose not for thy companions.—*Leo. H. Grindon.*

Vers. 6, 7. *Chasteneth.* Afflictions are blessings to us when we can bless God for them. Suffering has kept many from sinning. God had one Son without sin, but He never had any without sorrow. Fiery trials make golden Christians; sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions. (*Dyer.*) O God, I have made an ill use of thy mercies, if I have not learnt to be content with thy correction.—*Bp. Hall.*

Vers. 7, 8. *Good land.* O the splendour of this brilliant conclusion to a gloomy history. Glory be unto him who saw in the apparent evil the true way to the real good. With patience we will endure the present gloom, for the morning cometh. Over the hills faith sees the daybreak, in whose light we shall enter into a wealthy place. (*Spurgeon.*) However long and dreary be the winter, we are always indemnified by the spring; not merely by the enjoyment of it when it comes, but by the anticipation. So with the mists and wintry days of life; while they last they are painful, but their clearing away is glorious, and we find that they are only veils and fore-runners of something bright. Nature never forgets her destination, nor Divine love its compensation.—*Leo. H. Grindon.*

Vers. 11–15. *Eaten and full.* “An epicure digs his grave with his teeth. Gluttony kills more than the sword.” In the day of good be thou in good.

When God gives thee prosperity, do thou enjoy it with a cheerful and thankful heart. (*Bp. Reynolds.*) “In all time of our wealth, good Lord deliver us.”

Ver. 16. *Latter end.* Works of providence, as works of creation, may begin in chaos, and seem “without form and void” (Gen. 1, 2;) but they end in admirable order and beauty. (*Bp. Reynolds.*)

Vers. 17, 18. *Wealth.* When the danger is past God is forgotten. (*Ray's proverbs.*) No sooner does the warm aspect of good fortune shine, than all the plans of virtue, raised like a beautiful frost-work in the winter season of adversity, thaw and disappear. (*Warburton.*) “What shall I come to, Father!” said a young man, “If I go on prospering in this way?” “To the grave,” replied the father.—*G. S. Bowes.*

Vers. 19, 20. *Other gods.* Any opinion which tends to keep out of sight the living and loving God, whether it be to substitute for Him an idol, or an occult agency, or a formal creed—can be nothing better than the portentous shadow projected from the slavish darkness of an ignorant heart. (*Hallam.*) *Perish.* All the princes of the earth have not had so many subjects betrayed and made traitors by their enemies, as God hath lost souls by the means of images.—*Bp. Hooper.*

With what unutterable humility  
We should bow down, thou blessed cross, to  
Thee,  
Seeing our vanity and foolishness,  
When to our own devices left, we frame  
A shameful creed of craft and cruelty.  
*Landon.*

## CHAPTER IX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Moses dissuadeth them from self-righteousness by recital of past sins and rebellion.

1. This day, this time. Once before they had been at the borders of Canaan; but did not enter. *Fenced* Oriental cities surrounded with high walls; cf. i. 28.

2. Anak, cf. Num. xiii. 22-33; Josh. xi. 21.

3. He, emphatic, consuming, cf. iv. 24; Heb. xii. 29. Swift and complete destruction.

4. My right. The land given not on account of their own merits, they must not pride themselves, therefore, in success.

5. The wickedness of the Canaanites, and the word uttered by oath to patriarchs were the reasons for giving the land to Israel.

6. Instead of meriting anything they were stiff-necked, hard of neck, obstinate and rebellious' cf. Ex. xxxii. 2; xxxiii. 35.

7-9. To prevent boasting of righteousness, acts of disobedience are rehearsed, *in wild*, as soon as free from Egypt. Also (even) in Horeb, "the conjunction introduces a special example of a general statement. The time and circumstances made the apostasy at Horeb particularly inexcusable." (*Sp. Com.*)

9-12. These circumstances should be remembered. Moses up in the mountain, fasting, receiving the tables of the law, specially written with the finger of God. When God was speaking in fire. In the day of assembly, when all the people were called out of the camp to the foot of Sinai (Ex. xix. 17); amid stupendous displays of divine majesty they corrupted themselves with the golden calf, cf. Ex. xxxi. 18; xxxii. 6.

12-14. Almost verbatim from Ex. xxxii. 7-10. *Let me alone*, desist from me, i.e., do not by intercession try to hinder me from destroying them. In Ex. xxxii. 10, "let me rest," i.e., cease to urge me.

15-17. The tables broken not as a mere outburst of indignation on his part, but as a declaration that they had broken the covenant by apostasy.

18-19. Moses briefly mentions the first intercession, Ex. xxxii. 11-13. Afterwards another 40 days were spent, and a second intercession (Ex. xxxiv. 9) given here, "not only that he might make the people thoroughly aware that at that time Israel could not boast even of the righteousness of its eminent men (cf. Is. xliii. 27), but also to bring out the fact, which is still more fully described in chap. x. 6 *sqq.*, that Aaron's investiture with the priesthood, and the maintenance of this institution, was purely a work of Divine grace." (*Delitz.*)

20. Aaron left responsible, guilty, and proved unfit to lead.

22-24. Not only at Horeb, but at *Tab.*, Num. xi. 1-3; *Massah*, Ex. xvii. 1 *sqq.*; *Kib.*, Num. xi. 34; xxxiii. 16, 17, and *Kedesh*, Num. xiii. 26; xxxii. 8. "The list is not arranged chronologically, but advances gradually from the smaller to more serious forms of guilt." (*Köl.*)

25. Fell down second intercession, in fuller detail.

26-29. Essential points given. Israel were God's people; He redeemed them, and must not look upon their sins, i.e., punish them; but remember His oath to their ancestors. His honour was concerned.

28. Not able, through incapacity or hatred (cf. Num. xiv. 16), neither of which would hinder God from saving a people redeemed, and especially His own.

## A MEMORABLE DAY.—Verses 1-3.

Israel forty years before had reached the borders of the promised land, but to their mortification were driven back (cf. Hom. ii. 1-3). Now they were



certain to enter it and nothing could hinder them. "Thou art to pass over Jordan *this day*."

**I. A day displaying Divine goodness.** They had been fed, defended and guided. Goodness and mercies had followed them and that day crowned all.

**II. A day reminding of Divine faithfulness.** Long before had the promise been given to those who left all to follow Him. This promise was not forgotten, though delayed in its fulfilment. "God cannot lie."

**III. A day to be improved.** "*Hear*" (ver. 1) and learn duty. "*Understand*" how to practise it. "*Drive them out*," and thus co-operate with God (ver. 3.) When we appreciate and improve our privileges God will assure us of His presence and help. "As the Lord hath said unto thee"—

#### DIVINE FAVOUR NOT HUMAN MERIT.—*Verses 4-6.*

God assures them of victory over enemies, and of possession of Canaan. But they were not to think that it was on account of their own righteousness—because good in their character or obedient in their service—that this favour was given to them. Israel were a stiff-necked and the Canaanites a corrupt people, all, therefore, must be ascribed to God's grace.

**I. In gaining earthly possessions.** Health and strength, houses and lands, family possessions and social distinctions are God's gifts and not human acquisitions. If we boast of our prudence and skill, from whence do these come? The means and the materials of prosperity must be ascribed to God's favour. Success in any undertaking, positions in life are not deserved, not given to merit, but in sovereign mercy. No credit whatever is due to us. "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them (Ps. xliv. 3.)"

**II. In conflict with mighty foes.** The Anakims were famous in report and mighty in stature. Israel could not "stand before" them in the field. God alone could destroy them. Many foes array themselves against the Christian. Doubts and fears within; dangers and difficulties without, make him shrink from the encounter. Sinful habits, giant evils of every degree and strength oppose his efforts and progress. But faith in God makes "valiant in fight." He remembers the promise, the scenes of conflict and triumph in past experience and the victories of God's people in every age. Then his trembling heart takes courage, he goes into the combat, and the foe is vanquished or retreats. With God it is "Athanasius against the world," Luther against Popedom. Not by our own valour and numbers, in God's strength alone can we overcome. "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you. (Jos. xxiii. 10; cf. Lev. xxvi. 8.)"

**III. In the bestowment of religious privileges.** Christian ordinances and residence in a Christian country—pardon of sin a fruitful life—perfect peace and the joys of heaven spring from grace and not from "works of righteousness which we have done (Tit. iii. 5). There is no worth, no merit or cause in us. Hence Wickliffe's prayer: "Lord, save me *gratis*." "If by grace then is it, no more (longer) of works (as a moving cause), otherwise (in that case) grace is no more (longer) grace (*i.e.* it ceases to be grace)" (Rom. ii. 6).

"Tis not by works of righteousness  
Which our own hands have done," etc.

PENITENT REMEMBRANCE OF PAST SIN.—*Verses 7, 8, 22, 23.*

To make it evident that they had no reason to boast of their own righteousness, Moses reviews their sins. Generally they had provoked God, specially in certain places, and it was a mercy they had not been destroyed long before this. We forget our sins, think only of our good deeds, and become self-righteous, and self-satisfied. “Remember and forget not.”

**I. Remember sin in its aggravating circumstances.** Sin at any time is risky, but peculiar circumstances intensify its guilt. 1. *Aggravated by the special places in which it was committed.* Even at the Red Sea (*cf.* Ex. xiv. 11, and Ps. cvi. 7), when starting in their pilgrimage; also in Horeb v. 8, amid flames of fire and awful darkness (Ex. xxxii. 3–4). At Taberah they were discontented (Num. xi. 1–3); at Massah they murmured (Ex. xvii. 1); at Kibroth-hattaavah they lusted (Num. xi. 4); and at Kadesh-barnea, on the very borders of the land of promise, they reproached God and sought to return to Egypt (Num. xiv. 1). The list begins with lower forms, and advances to more aggravating evils. How often have we on solemn occasions and in holy places “been rebellious against the Lord.” 2. *Aggravated by the frequency of its commission.* “From the day thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place” (verse 7.) Time after time were they warned, and check after check was given, but “they believed not His Word” (Ps. cvi. 24). Can we not remember solemn vows on beds of sickness, deep impressions in the House of God, followed up by forgetfulness and acts of wilful sin? “All their transgressions in all their sins” (Lev. xvi. 21).

**II. Remember sin in bitter experience.** In the light of inward feelings we may read the guilt of sin. Outward acts make deep impressions within us, and our own memory records the fruits of past disobedience. Israel had seen the death of arrogant Egyptians and wicked idolators—the miraculous power and gracious rewards of Jehovah. They knew the rewards of obedience, and the consequences of disobedience. They had been chastised and delivered, and sin in them had impaired memory, and blotted out all remembrance of God and His goodness. Most bitter is the fruit of sin in conscience and life. Its remnants are corruption, shame, and death. “What fruit (moral results) had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed (self reproached), for the end of these things is death (in its widest and most solemn sense” (Rom. vi. 21).

“Our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us.”—*Shakespeare.*

**III. Remember sin in its consequences before God.** Sin not only brings bitter experience, but exposes to serious consequences before God. 1. *God was provoked.* “Ye provoked the Lord to wrath.” He is not insensible, does not overlook sin. It is opposition to His nature, authority, and government. “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.” 2. *Death was threatened.* “Angry with you to have destroyed you.” Sin kindled the fire of Jehovah against them; but He was slow, very slow, to destroy them. They escaped, as we must escape, by a Mediator. “Had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach to turn away His wrath.”

THE SIN OF HOREB.—*Verses 8–12.*

Israel continually sinned, and therefore deserved not the land into which they were about to enter. But some sins were specially provoking and shameful. The molten calf at Horeb must never be forgotten.

**I. It was a violation of God's covenant.** They had solemnly pledged themselves to obey God, and ratified the covenant with blood. "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. xxiv. 3-8). Feelings soon change, and emotions die away. Men are not cultured, not *spiritual* enough to worship an invisible (Rom. i. 20-25; Col. i. 15; Heb. xi. 27), they become *sensual* and demand a visible God. When we substitute anything for God, we practically deny Him. "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image."

**II. It was a provocation in most solemn circumstances.** The purpose of assembling, the scenes around them, and the reason for the absence of their leader, lent solemnity to the occasion. Moses contrasts the levity and guilt of the people, with his interview with God and his fasting on the mount. God was near, but they forgot Him. They defied every barrier. Moses was fasting, praying, and receiving the law; God was appearing in awful signs, yet they "quickly turned aside out of the way." "Also (even) in Horeb ye provoked the Lord."

**III. It was most corrupting in its influence.** They "have corrupted themselves" (verse 12). All sin debases body and mind. It is a moral putrefaction, and offensive to God. It renders men unprofitable (*i.e.* corrupt, useless, unfit for the end of their creation), Rom. iii. 12; Ps. xiv. 1-3. Man, once the high priest of Nature, the glorious link between the material and the spiritual, has forsaken his Maker, thrown off his holy robes and "corrupted his way." "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy."

#### GOD PROVOKED AT HOREB.

On this part of Israel's history we copy from Spurgeon's *Treasury of David* (Ps. cvi. 7).

*To provoke*, is an expression setting forth a peculiar and more than ordinary degree of misbehaviour, and seems to import an insolent daring resolution to offend. A resolution not contented with one single stroke of disobedience, but such as multiplies and repeats the action till the offence greatens and rises into an affront; and as it relates to God, so I conceive it aimed at Him in a threefold respect. 1. It rises up against the *power and prerogative of God*. An assault upon God sitting upon the throne, snatching his sceptre, defiance of his royalty and supremacy. He that provokes God, dares Him to strike to revenge the injury and invasion upon His honour—considers not the weight of His arm, but puffs at all and looks the terrors of revenging justice in the face. 2. Provoking God imports an *abuse of His goodness*. God clothed with power is the object of fear; but as He displays goodness, of love. By one He commands, by the other He wins, courts our obedience. An affront on His goodness, tenderness and love, as much exceeds an affront of His power as a wound at the heart transcends a blow on the hand. For when God works miracles of mercy to do good upon a people as He did upon the Israelites, was it not a provocation, infinitely base and insufferable, a degree of ingratitude, higher than the heavens struck at, and deeper than the sea that they passed through. 3. Provoking God imports an affront upon *His long suffering and His patience*. The musings of Nature in the breast tell us how keenly, how regretfully, every man resents the abuse of His love; how hardly any prince, but one, can put up an offence against His mercy; and how much more affrontive to despise majesty ruling by the golden sceptre of pardon, than by the iron rod of penal law. But patience is a further, a higher advance of mercy—mercy drawn out at length, wrestling with baseness, and striving if



possible even to weary and outdo ingratitude ; therefore sin against this is the highest pitch of provocation. For when patience is tired, let all the inventions of mankind find something further upon which to hope, or against which to sin. The Israelites sinned against God's patience, one offence following upon another, the last rising highest, until the treasures of grace and pardon were so far drained and exhausted, that they provoked God to *swear* ; and what is more to *swear in His wrath* and with a full purpose of revenge, *that they should never enter into His rest.*—Robert South.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Go in.* 1. Land to be possessed. 2. Go in and possess it—with courage in conflict—in dependence upon God's presence, not upon self-righteousness and human prowess. Israel were not casual invaders, forsaken of God, but now emboldened, and must no longer delay (*cf.* Num. xiii 25.) "Fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life."

Ver. 2. *Great and tall.* 1. Men of stature physically. 2. Mentally of gigantic mind. 3. Spiritually "the measure of the stature of the fulness in Christ Jesus." (Ep. iv. 13.)

Ver. 4. *Speak not.* Man apt to be proud *in heart*. When proud in heart *he speaks*, boasts of self-righteousness and good deeds. God seeks to check this spirit by His Word and providence—"Many had proved wise if they had not thought themselves so." *Bp. Hall.*

Vers. 4-6. *God doth drive them out*—in sovereign power—on account of their constant wickedness, therefore nothing due to you, fear lest you forfeit possessions and God's favour.

Ver. 7. *Grievous sins.* 1. Forgetfulness of God, "forget not." 2. Rebellion. "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord." 3. Continual provocation. "From the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt."

Ver. 8. *The Lord was angry.* God is said to be angry when he doeth as an angry man useth to do : viz. (1)

chide ; (2) smite ; revenge being the next effect of anger.—*Trapp.*

1. A charge. "Ye provoked the Lord," by impenitence, forgetfulness, and disobedience. 2. A consequence. "The Lord was angry with you to have destroyed you." We are under deep obligations to God as Creator, Benefactor, and Saviour ; but too often unfaithfully forget his benefits, ungratefully murmur against his dealings and live in habitual rebellion. (Is. i. 2, 3.)

Vers. 8-12. I. The absent leader. "I was gone up into the mount." *a.* The purpose of his absence "to receive the tables of stone." *b.* The length of his absence, "forty days and forty nights." II. The Apostate People, "turned aside out of the way." (Ver. 12.) III. The sacrilegious act. "They have made them a molten calf." (Ex. xxxii. 7.) IV. The fearful consequences. God forsaken and self corruption. There is intimate connection between idolatry and self corruption.

*Corrupted themselves.* 1. Sin self debasing. 2. God's service our honour and adornment. God should be our glory, and we should not be a shame or dishonour to him. "Adorn the doctrine of God ; make it trim, neat, and lovely in the sight of others. (Tit. ii. 10.) Let there be beautiful harmony between profession and practice.

*The sin of Horeb.* I. The sin remembered. 1. Idolatry. Not merely forgetting, or disowning God, but setting up an idol in his place. 2. Idolatry of the worst kind : changing the glory of God into the similitude of

an ox. 3. The idolatry of Egypt under which they had suffered, and from which they had been delivered. 4. Idolatry after many wonderful interpositions of the true God in their behalf. II. The remembrance of sin. 1. For humiliation. It was the sin of

their fathers. 2. For self condemnation. "We have sinned with our fathers." It was our nature in them, and it is their nature in us that has committed this great sin.—*Treasury of David*.

### THE GREAT INTERCESSION—*Verses 13-20.*

This is a second mediation on the Mount. A mediation most remarkable and instructive. The crisis was terrible and trying to the great leader. But Moses stood "in the breach" and warded off the danger.

**I. The need of intercession.** Read these verses with Ex. xxxii., and we have the whole story. 1. *The people had sinned.* They had openly broken the law they solemnly vowed to keep. They had bowed to a calf in pretence of worshipping Jehovah. The contagion spread. The noise in the camp was not the noise of war, but of riot and dancing. "Ye have sinned a great sin." 2. *The people were exposed to death through sin.* God was provoked to "anger and hot displeasure" (verse 19). Sin is no trifle; it rouses Divine wrath, and this wrath burns sometimes like a fire. "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them" (Ex. xxxii. 10). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." 3. *Aaron's life was endangered.* "The Lord was angry with Aaron to have destroyed him" (verse 20). Too weak to resist, he yielded to the people, received their gifts, and helped them to make the golden calf. He was a partaker in the guilt of idolatry, and would have suffered the penalty but for the intercession of Moses. "Neither be partaker of other men's sins."

**II. The intercessor provided.** "I fell down before the Lord." The spirit in which Moses pleaded, the arguments which he used, and the results which he gained, are special features in this intercession. In Moses we have—1. *Great earnestness.* "I fell down," not in mere formal attitude, but with intense feeling and energy. He was humble, but earnest. 2. *Great sympathy.* Formerly he had chosen their lot (Heb. xi. 25), and notwithstanding their unworthiness he does not forget them. His feeling for his people is a type of the sympathy of Jesus, our Mediator. 3. *Great disinterestedness.* He wished not for greatness at their expense, but refused an offer most tempting. His self-sacrifice is seen—(a) In abstaining from food. "I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins." (b) In his willingness to sacrifice life itself for their sake. "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book" (Ex. xxxii. 32). 4. *Great boldness.* His seemed a hopeless case, and "the odds were against him;" yet he ventures near, and pleads with boldness at God's feet. 5. *Great perseverance.* Many say, "You might as well give it up, it is all lost labour;" but Moses intercedes though repelled, "Let me alone;" intercedes though he himself "was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the Lord was wroth." Long and perseveringly did he plead. I fell down "as at the first, forty days and forty nights."

**III. The results of the intercession.** Disheartening as were the circumstances, blessed results were gained. 1. *God hearkened to Moses.* What a change from, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them." 2. *The people were delivered.* They were not consumed for their sins. "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people" (Ex. xxxii.

14). 3. *Aaron's life was spared.* "I prayed for Aaron also at the same time" (verse 20). What encouragement for us to plead for our friends and fellow-sinners. Never despair, for God is omnipotent and "delighteth in mercy." "Is there anything too hard for the Lord" (verse 2). If Moses prevailed, how much more does Jesus "who ever lives to intercede for us."

### AARON'S SIN.—Verse 20.

While Moses was up in the Mount, Aaron was left in charge to advise, direct and control the people. But how did he act? (*cf.* Ex. xxiv. 14; xxxii. 21-23).

**I. Aaron's sin.** Weak-minded, he was easily drawn into sin, aided and abetted it. We must neither bring sin upon others nor encourage them in it. His excuses were insufficient and false. "What did this people unto thee, that thou has brought so great a sin upon them?"

**II. Aaron's exposure to danger.** His whole conduct so angered God that he would have been destroyed but for the intercession of Moses. "The Lord was angry, very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him." No man's character and position can shelter him from the wrath of God.

**III. Aaron's deliverance.** "I prayed for Aaron also the same time." The most eminent and eloquent men sin and need an intercessor. Moses mildly rebuked his brother, but retaliates not. He prays for him and delivers him from death. What value, what power in the prayers of God's people. "The effectual fervent (in thought) prayer of a righteous man availeth (energizes) much." (Jas. v. 16.)

What are men better than sheep or goats,  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is, every way  
Bound by gold chains about the fact of God.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 13. *A stiff-necked people.* A metaphor taken from a horse that stiffens his neck against the reins and will not be guided by the rider. Hence it denotes a people obstinate, rebellious, who will not submit to God (*cf.* Ex. xxxii. 9, xxxiii. 3; 2 Chron. xxx. 8; Ps. lxxv. 5; Jer. xvii. 23; Acts vii. 51).

Vers. 14. *Let me alone.* 1. God's indignation and apparent refusal to bless. 2. The power of prayer to change circumstances, if not the purpose of God. "The Lord repented of the evil."

"I will make" of thee a nation.

1. The promise—a nation, mightier

and greater than they. 2. The condition of its fulfilment. To obtain self aggrandisement at the sacrifice of the people. 3. The refusal of this condition. The test was severe, but the spirit in which it was met redounds to the honour of Moses.

Vers. 15-17. *The broken tables.* 1. An expression of righteous indignation. Perhaps a revival of the spirit which had formerly led him astray (Ex. ii. 12). 2. A symbol of the broken covenant. 3. A witness to exclusion from Divine favour. This was a solemn sight, which should have deeply impressed their hearts when they saw the blessings which they had lost.



Vers. 18-19. 1. Fear of Divine anger. 2. Prayer for Divine help. 3. Interposition of Divine mercy.

Vers. 20. Learn.—1. That a good man may very grievously sin. 2. That his good deeds cannot save him from the consequences of his sin. 3. That there is no sin which does not require atonement and mediation.

### THE IDOL DESTROYED.—*Verse 21.*

Israel in Egypt had some leaning towards idolatry ; but miraculous events since the exodus had checked this tendency. Now in the absence of Moses, the cry was raised “Make us a god.” The god was made and then destroyed. In this we see—1. *The Anger of Moses.* The gospel enjoins broadest love to the sinner, but deepest indignation against sin. Pity not only makes benevolent and charitable, but imparts strength and zeal to resist Satan. Yet like all other passions, “righteous indignation,” needs controlling grace and must not be unwisely exercised. “That anger is without sin ; that is, against sin.” (*Mason*). “Be ye angry and sin not.” 2. *The courage of Moses.* The meekest man may be firm and courageous. Six hundred thousand seem paralyzed before one man who stands up for God (Deut. xxxii. 30). When conscious of right and our cause good we need not fear. “The righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. xxviii. 1 ; Ps. liii. 5). Virtue is bold and goodness never fearful. 3. *The vanity of the idol.* How impotent this God before Moses. How stupid the people and how foolish their conduct ! How irrational to adore idols less valuable, less honoured than their makers ! The golden idols of self, and worldly pleasure are blind and senseless. Their worship is folly, wickedness and death. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

### GRIEVOUS REBELLIONS.—*Verses 22-24.*

Moses here reminds them of minor sins, of other places besides Horeb, in which they rebelled against God. These memorials of sin and punishment should humble them and enhance God’s mercy to them. Notice—

**I. The Divine Command.** “Go up and possess the land.” This direction had been given many times—given with emphasis and detail. God repeats directions in “line upon line” to satisfy reasonable doubt and stimulate to hearty obedience. Let us say with the prophet, “I will watch to see what he will say unto me.”

**II. Israel’s disobedience to this command.** “Ye rebelled against the commandment.” 1. Unbelief was *the source* of this rebellion. “Ye believed Him not.” Without faith no impression can be made upon the heart by sense, reason, or miracle. Stones are rounded and smoothed by the friction of water ; but the heart of unbelief is hard and insensible to Divine goodness and Divine threatening. 2. Refusing to hear was *the sign* of unbelief. “Nor hearkened to His voice.” Listless inattention to the word is sure proof of unbelief. If we believe not the word of God, we cannot esteem His gifts nor “possess the land.” “When pilgrims to the celestial city begin to doubt the Lord of the way, they soon come to think little of the rest at the journey’s end, and this is the surest way to make them bad travellers” (*Spurgeon*). “They could not enter in because of unbelief.”

**III. The rebellion which resulted from this disobedience.** Stubborn refusal was repeated, and rebellion, open and long-continued, was the sad result. Con-

tinuance in sin and unbelief always go together. There is reflex influence upon faith and character. First unbelief, then disobedience to the word, and, lastly, open defiance. "Man knows the beginning of sin ; but who bounds the issues thereof?" says one. "He addeth rebellion unto his sin" (Job xxxiv. 37).

### PROLONGED INTERCESSION.—*Verses 25-29.*

Moses retires to his mediation on account of apostasy at Sinai (*cf.* verses 18-20). Whether the forty days mean a second, or only describe the first period, we see how earnest and prolonged the intercession was.

**I. The intercession of Moses for his people.** The sin at Horeb was most provoking—the climax of one long rebellion. God threatened destruction, and Moses goes between to intercede and save. 1. *In the agony of prayer.* "I fell down" in profound humility and intense anxiety. The best of men have thus pleaded for others. Knox cried, "O Lord, give me Scotland, or I die." It is said that Latimer was so constant and earnest in prayer during his imprisonment, that he was unable to rise up without help. 2. *With symbols of grief* (verse 18). His soul was stirred within him, and he fasted in grief. Personal need and personal advancement were forgotten. "I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (Neh. i. 4).

**II. The pleas which Moses urged in this intercession.** He was obliged to own their wickedness, and could only bow his head in solemn prayer. "Their character was bad indeed," says Matthew Henry, "when he that appeared an advocate for them could not give them a good word, and had nothing else to say on their behalf, but that God had done great things for them, which really did but aggravate their crime." 1. *He pleads God's ownership of them.* "Thy people and thine inheritance." After creating and purchasing them wilt Thou destroy them! "Remember Thy congregation which Thou has purchased of old." 2. *He pleads God's goodness to them.* They were redeemed and brought out of Egypt. He knew them ; had taken great care of them and worked miracles on their behalf. How strange, how inconsistent now to forsake them ! No man is willing to lose his property and no king will relinquish his dominions. God will, therefore, keep his own and maintain His right over His people. 3. *He pleads God's covenant with their fathers.* "Remember Thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The people are still the posterity of Jacob, and their rebellion does not alter Thy purpose to give them the land. God desires to be reminded of His promise, that a sense of His faithfulness and our unworthiness may be deepened within us. 4. *He pleads the honour of God Himself.* (Ver. 28.) We should ever be jealous for the glory of God and the interests of His people. If God destroyed Israel what would the Egyptians say ! How the enemy would rejoice and sound aloud their triumph. (*cf.* Ex. xxxii. 12, 13.) They would say : 1. *God was unable to help.* "The Lord was not able to bring them into the land." Was Divine energy spent. Had God been overcome or lost His omnipotence to save. Oh never let this be said ! That *mighty* hand is not shortened that it cannot save. (Is. lix. 1.) "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem ? or have I no power to deliver ? (Is. i. 2), or, 2. *God hated His people.* "Because He hated them." Stiffnecked and most provoking had they been ; but Divine love was unchangeable. God will never cast off His people. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 21. *Dust in the brook.* The dregs of sin. No other water to drink, and this most bitter and unsatisfactory. Sin curses our blessings and embitters our enjoyments. (Mal. ii. 2.) As Moses destroyed the form, calcined the material of this idol and reduced it to powder, so must all idols be destroyed. The people seemed to swallow their own sin, so bitterness follows indulgence. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." "He shall drink as he brews," says Mt. Henry.

Vers. 24-26. The great sin. The terrible danger. The power of a

righteous man in turning away danger. Mighty as was the sin of Israel, the prayer of Moses was mightier. How earnestly should we plead for a backsliding people and a guilty world! "I *prayed*, and he had a hard tug of it; but prayer is the best lever at a dead lift."—*Trapp*.

Vers. 26, 27. 1. A people enslaved, wicked and rebellious; yet chosen, redeemed and purchased. 2. God's remembrance and faithfulness. "Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name; leave us not." (Jer. xiv. 9; cf. Ps. xc. 7; 1 Kings viii. 51.)

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IX.

Vers. 1-3. *Mightier.* Never covet *easy* paths. The Lord keep you and me from that sin, beloved. (*J. H. Evans*.) A soldier in battle should feel as if the whole battle depended upon himself. *Pass over.* We are afraid of being desperate Christians. Oh, let us be desperate! The Church needs extremity—a great tug out of the world. (*Lady Powerscourt*.) *Stand before.* A passionate desire and unwearied will can perform impossibilities, or what seem to be such to the old and feeble. If we do but go on some unseen path will open up the hills. We must not allow ourselves to be discouraged by the apparent disproportion between the result of the single efforts and the magnitude of the obstacles to be overcome.—*Sharp*.

Vers. 4-6. *My righteousness.* It is the peculiar glory of gospel grace to humble every believer in the dust, and from gratitude and love to produce the best obedience. This grace will carry us, if we do not wiffully betray our trust, victoriously through all difficulties (2 Cor. xii. 9).

"The greatest attribute of Heav'n is mercy; And 'tis the crown of justice, and the glory Where it may kill with right, to save with pity."—*Beaumont and Fletcher*.

Ver. 7. *Forget.* The sin of the understanding leads on to the sin of the memory. What is not understood will soon be forgotten. Men feel little interest in preserving husks; if they know nothing of the inner kernel they will take no care of the shells. It was an aggravation of Israel's sin that when God's mercies were so numerous they yet were able to forget them. Surely some out of such a multitude of benefits ought to have remained engraven upon their hearts; but if grace does not give us understanding, nature will soon cast out the memory of God's great goodness.—*Spurgeon*.

Vers. 8-17. *Horeb.* The ox image here is sarcastically called "a calf;" idols are worthy of no respect, scorn is never more legitimately used than when it is poured upon all attempts to set forth the Invisible God.—*Spurgeon*.

*Molten image.* They had given up the true God whom it had been their glory to adore, and had set up a rival to Him, not a representation of Him; for how should He be likened to a bullock? False gods, attempts to represent the true God, and indeed, all material things which are worshipped



are so much filth upon the face of the earth, whether they be crosses, crucifixes, virgins, wafers, relics, or even the Pope himself. God abhors them and so do we.—*Spurgeon*.

Ver. 12. *Arise* from off thy knees, the petitioner's posture. St. James, they say, had knees as hard as camels' knees, with continual kneeling; and Hilarion was found dead in his oratory with knees bent, eyes and hands lifted up.—*Trapp*.

Ver. 17. *Cast them*. Drive away nature and back it comes at a gallop (*French proverb*). Whosoever is out of patience is out of possession of his soul. Men must not turn bees and kill themselves in stinging others.—*Bacon*.

Vers. 22-24. *From the day that*

*I knew you*. To fall out at starting was a bad sign. Those who did not begin well can hardly be expected to end well. Israel is not quite out of Egypt, and yet begins to provoke the Lord by doubting His power and questioning his faithfulness to his promise.—*Spurgeon*.

Vers. 26-29. *Prayed*. "The gift of the knees." "The impotence of man with the omnipotence of God." It is not the length but the *strength* of prayer that is required, not so much the labour of life, as the travail of the heart.

"Pleads he in earnest? look upon his face;  
His eyes do drop no tears, his prayers are in  
jest;  
His words come from his mouth, ours from  
our breast:  
He prays but faintly, and would be denied;  
We pray with heart and soul, and all beside."  
*Shakespeare*.

## CHAPTER X.

CRITICAL NOTES.—1. *That time*. The order for the ark was given before the apostasy of the people, *cf.* Ex. xxv., and the tables were put into it after the dedication of the tabernacle. But Moses connects events related to each other for his own purpose without strict chronological order. *Hew*, cut with an axe, to shape. *Tables*, blocks or tablets.

3. *Shittim*. Acacia tree, Ex. xxv. 5.

5. *There they be*. "Another minute but important circumstance, the public mention of which at the time attests the veracity of the sacred historian."

6. *Beeroth*. Identical with Benejaakan of Num. xxxiii. 31. *Mosera* and Moseroth (plu.), in the vicinity of mount Hor (Num. xxxiii. 31); as Aaron died there, *Eleazar* ministered—was installed priest, Ex. xxiii. 25; xxviii. 1.

7. *Gudgodah*. Hor-hagidgad (mount of thunder, Num. xxxiii. 32). *Jotbath*—Jotbathah of Num. xxxiii. 33.

8. *That time*. Of encampment at Sinai thirty-eight years since. The tribe of *Levi* separated from other tribes. *Stand*. Exclusively the business of priests, Num. vi. 23. Non-priestly family of Kohath carried the ark, Num. iv. 15.

9. *Cf.* Num. xviii. 20-24; Deut. xviii. 1, 2.

10. Moses resumes his address and sums up the results of his intercession.

11. "This commandment and promise was a testimony that God now was reconciled unto them by the intercession of Moses" (*Ainsworth*).

12. *Now*, *i.e.*, "Since all that thou hast is thus shown to be of mere grace, without desert of thine own." *Require*, etc., *i.e.* understand the spiritual claims of these formal regulations. *Fear*. Filial fear, pious reverence, existing only with love. *Walk*. Accept truth, and follow the course

rescribed, cf. Gen. xviii. 19; Ps. xxv. 4, 5; Acts xviii. 25, 26. **Serve.** The genuine fruit of love, John xiv. 15; Gal. v. 13; 1 John iii. 18.

**14. Heaven of heavens** imports all included under the name of heaven. Jehovah is not a local God. His claims cannot be limited, cf. 1 Kings viii. 27; Ps. cxlviii. 4.

**15.** He was not bound to elect Israel, yet did so of His own free will.

**16. Circumcise,** therefore be no longer stiffnecked; be not insensible to God's love, persist no longer in obstinate resistance to God.

**17.** The demand for surrender is followed by a description of the nature and acts of Jehovah. He is not a local Deity, and though taking special interest in Israel—He is *God of gods, i.e.,* the supreme God, the essence of all that is divine, of all power and might, Ps. cxxxvi. 2. *Lord of lords,* supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, *regardeth,* not subject to prejudice, nor perverts justice as human judges, Lev. xix. 15; 2 Chron. xix. 7.

**18, 19.** He is impartial and uncorruptible, *executes,* vindicates the rights of the defenceless (orphan and widow) and manifests loving care for the helpless and oppressed (stranger).

**19. Love.** As they had been strangers in Egypt, and knew what it was to need help, they were to love the stranger as God loved him, and relieve his wants, Jas ii. 15, 16; 1 Jno. iii. 10, 17.

**20-22. Fear.** Reverence is due to God in act and life on account of what He is and what He has done. He is the ground of confidence and joy (thy praise), inspiring fear and dread by *terrible things* done for them.

**21.** Amongst the mighty acts was one specially to be remembered.

**22.** Out of 70 persons, notwithstanding cruelty and oppression, had grown a mighty nation' Gen. xlv. 26; Acts vii. 14.

### THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF PRAYER.—*Verses 1-11.*

Through the intercession of Moses God not only spared Israel, but gave them further pledges of His love.

**I. The law was renewed.** "He wrote on the tables, according to the first writing." (Ver. 4.) God refused not a second transcript of his will, but in mercy renewed his covenant with them. 1. *The law written with the finger of God.* At first a supernatural "voice" was heard, now a supernatural hand writes and repeats the ten words. 2. *The law unaltered.* The second edition was "like unto the first." It needed no correction, no amendment. What God wrote differed not from what he spoke. The written word is from God and unchangeable, as the spoken word. 3. *The law kept in the ark.* "Put the tables in the ark." (Ver. 5.) Thus was it perpetuated and transmitted to us. Unto us are "committed the oracles of God." Let us understand, keep, and spread them.

**II. The priesthood was established.** The institution was forty years old, but provision was made for a standing order, perpetual succession, and settled maintenance. 1. *The high priesthood in the person of Eleazar.* Aaron died, but his son succeeded him. God will never want men to carry on His work. The robes of office will never soil. "Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son." 2. *The ordinary priesthood in the tribe of Levi.* This tribe was specially chosen for the service of the sanctuary. A settled ministry is the gift of God to the Church. (Ep. iv. 11.) The continuation of this ministry and the preservation of religious ordinances, betoken God's favour. God can remove the candlestick (Rev. ii. 4) and punish sin. Hence need of prayer for ministers. "Brethren, pray for us."

**III. The command to advance was given.** Permission to march was gained

by prayer. Moses the intercessor must be the leader (ver. 11.) Those are only fit to lead who preserve from ruin. God gives a full and unconditional promise of his presence. There can be no guidance and advance in life without Him. He can stop progress at any time and in any department of life. Hence "prayer hinders no journey." "I forgot to pray this morning," says Philip Henry, "and the chariot wheels drove heavily along." The most prayerful ministers and people are the most prosperous and progressive. Unexpected and marvellous things may be witnessed through prayer. "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

#### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE.—Verses 8, 9.

Moses mentions as a special favour that when Aaron died the high priesthood was renewed in the person of Eleazar, and that the Levites were separated to minister in the tabernacle and perpetuate the ordinary priesthood.

**I. The Ministry appointed.** The tribe of Levi were most zealous for the honour of the Lord when the golden calf was worshipped at Sinai (Ex. xxxii. 26–29). Moses then charged them to consecrate themselves (*lit.* to fill their hands) to the Lord (ver. 29). Independent of the fact that Moses and Aaron belonged to this tribe, there was, therefore, special reason for its selection. 1. *It is honourable service.* If it be deemed a preferment to minister to an earthly sovereign, how much more to be servant of "the King of Kings and Lord of Lords." "Happy are these Thy servants, which stand continually before Thee." (2 Chr. ix. 7.) 2. *It is holy service,* separated and consecrated to the Lord. They had to do with "the most holy things," and had to be washed, cleaved, and offered for an offering. (Num. viii. 15.) Holy and pure life must be seen in the service of God. 3. *It is responsible service.* They had to "minister." Priests are servants; not "Lords over God's heritage." (1 Pet. v. 3.) No toil so responsible and noble as this. Christ himself came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." 4. *It is joyful service.* "To bless His name." Levites sang and played on instruments. God's service is not irksome but joyous, free, and delightful.

**II. The introduction to this ministry.** Under the Gospel all believers are called into holy service, and raised to the dignity of "sons," "kings," and "priests." But for the Christian ministry there must be: 1. *Divine call.* "The Lord separated," the Lord spake, not to sanction some human plan, but to reveal his own. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was." 2. *Divine direction.* The office is not only created, but its duties minutely specified. To bear the ark, to stand and minister, and to bless the Lord and the people. 3. *Divine qualification.* Suitable gifts, inward persuasion by the Holy Spirit, and commission to draw nigh. None are meet for holy ministry, but by the grace of God and the sanctification of the Holy Ghost (*cf.* 2 Cor. ii. 16; Gal. i. 15.)

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1–3. *Tables.* First uttered in fire, written on stone, renewed in mercy, and preserved and portable in the ark. *Like the first.* "Which Moses had broken; to show how we in

our nature had broken the law, and could not be saved by the keeping of it. This Christ, our true Moses, repairs again, writing the law not in tables of stone, but in the hearts of



believers, and enabling them in some good measure to keep it (John i. 17), walking, as Luther phraseth it, in the heaven of the promise, but in the earth of the law; that in respect of believing, this of obeying.—*Trapp*.

Ver. 6. The relation between the ordinances of religion and temporal blessings. "The earlier commentators observed the inward connection between the continuation of the high-priesthood and the water brooks. *J. Gerhard*, for example, observes: "God generally associates material blessings with spiritual; as long as the ministry of the Word and the observance of Divine worship flourish among us, God will also provide for our temporal necessities."—*Keil*.

*Aaron's death and Eleazar's succession.* I. The common destiny of men. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." II. The providence of God in the arrangement of this destiny. All life depends upon God. Aaron died according to a Divine purpose "into Mount Hor at the commandment of the Lord, and died there." (Num. xxxiii. 38. III. The mercy of God in appointing successors to the office of the dead. Eleazar immediately, authoritatively, and securely took the place of Aaron. This, an evidence of reconciliation, encouraging to faith and humbling to pride. IV. The pledge of perpetuity to the cause of God. God's servants die, but the work goes on and ever will do. *Aaron's death.* 1. An indication of Divine displeasure. 2. A manifestation of mercy. He was not put to death as a transgressor by fire or plague from heaven; but dies in ease and honour. 3. A significant type. Aaron did not enter Canaan. The Levitical priesthood made nothing perfect. Christ brings in a better hope and an eternal priesthood. (Heb. vii. 23–25.) *Priest's office.* Invested with awful solemnity, Divine authority, and heavenly sanctity. Must not be undertaken lightly, unworthily, but in the fear, and for the glory of God, and the interests of men.

Ver. 8. *Minister service.* I. The

service of God demands all Levites. Every Christian should be a priest, ever ministering in the temple. 1. Burden-bearing. How often Christians murmur about their burdens, as though they were not honoured in being permitted to bear anything for God. 2. Singing. The Levites sang and played on instruments. Sing the song of gratitude and contentment. 3. Studying the law. "Search the Scriptures." 4. Attendance on the ordinances of the sanctuary. There is a special blessing for those who worship in God's house. II. God demands this service in our prime; "from twenty and five years old." We must give God the best we have. III. He demands this service when it can be most easily rendered. God did not ask of the Levites, nor does of us, impossibilities. The very young and the old were exempt from the bearing of the heavier burdens. God suits the burden to the back. All He asks is, that we shall do what we can.—*R. A. Griffin*.

Ver. 9. *Levi's inheritance and glory.* Not material wealth, such as houses and land. They were not permitted to engage in secular pursuits, but had to employ themselves wholly to God's service. God has their inheritance in the riches of his grace and the resources of his providence. "I am their inheritance, and ye shall give them no possession in Israel. I am their possession." (Ezek. xlv. 28.)

Ver. 11. *Arise.* 1. God has prepared an inheritance for his people. Joy, fruitfulness and power on earth, through faith; rest and heaven hereafter. 2. God's people should earnestly strive to attain this inheritance. The command to arise supposes neglect, weakness and prostration. 3. God will help His people when they strive to obey Him. He will provide a leader. "Take thy journey before the people." He will pledge his word to give success; "possess the land, which I swore I unto their fathers to give unto them."<sup>1</sup>

HUMAN OBLIGATION TO DIVINE GOODNESS.—*Verses 12-22.*

God having expressed His love and care towards them in their selection, having pardoned their apostasy, preserved their priesthood and privileges, He seeks to persuade them to love Him in return. "*And now Israel*" ("now that thou hast everything without desert or worthiness, purely from forgiving grace," *Keil*). "What doth the Lord require?" Under what obligation art thou put, but to fear and obey him? We give the sketch of the remaining chapter.

**I. Divine Requirements.** God's commands are just and reasonable. Mercies received require some return. "What shall I render?" (Ps. cxvi. 12.) 1. *To fear and obey God.* Be humble, thankful, and no longer refractory. Cherish reverence for the name and will of God. This fear must awaken love, and this love must prompt to active service. 2. *To purify the heart and life* (ver. 16). Circumcision was a symbol of purity and consecration to God. Be not insensible, but holy in heart and life. The heart and will must be renewed, and we must "abstain from fleshly lusts." 3. *To love strangers and practise hospitality* (ver. 19). We must defend the weak, be kind to strangers, impartial to all, and compassionate to all.

**II. The motives to enforce these Requirements.** This duty is enforced from many considerations. 1. *Personal advantage should prompt it.* "For thy good," (verse 13). Rewards of obedience are abundant in the present life. Our ease, comfort, and happiness are concerned; "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 2. *The divine nature claims it.* Jehovah cannot tolerate pride and stiff-neckedness towards Himself or towards other persons. In his nature and moral government we find abundant reasons for loving Him. (a) *God is supreme* (verse 14). His authority is not local nor circumscribed. He fills heaven and earth. (b) *God is rich in mercy* (verse 15). He chose Israel, not for what He saw in them; of His own free will He delighted in their fathers, and in sovereign mercy He made them "above all people." (c) *God is all powerful* (verse 17). Men fear powerful monarchs. God's omnipotence is always exerted to deliver from danger and do good. Hence, reverence due to His great name. (d) *God is no respecter of persons.* He is just and upright in nature, impartial and incorruptible in His dealings. Appearances deceive Him not; nor does He regard forms, professions and privileges without reality. "God accepteth no man's person" (Gal. ii. 6). 3. *Divine goodness deserves it.* Constant benefits require constant thanks. Partial gratitude and services are worthless. We must have "respect to all the commandments." "An honest soul would not conceal any debt he was to God," says Gurnall, "but calls upon itself to give an account for all his benefits. The skipping over one note in a lesson may spoil the grace of the music. Unthankfulness for one mercy disparageth our thanks for the rest." Reverence is due to God. (a) *For His gracious acts for His people* (verse 21). Terrible deeds were done for Israel, and great things have been shown to us. "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things He hath done for you" (1 Sam. xii. 24). (b) *For abundant prosperity unto His people* (verse 22). Israel's history and increase had been marvellous. From few, they had become many; from a weak, they had become a mighty nation. They were multiplied as the stars of heaven and blessed beyond degree! What then did they owe to God? Why be obstinate and disobedient?

"O! to grace how great a debtor,  
Daily I'm constrained to be."

GOD'S CLAIMS UPON OUR SERVICE.—*Verses 12-16.*

The intercession of Moses secured new blessings. New obedience should therefore be given to God, who bestowed them. The service which God claims is specified in its nature, breadth, and activity.

**I. The nature of the service claimed.** It is summed up and touchingly enforced in few words. "*What doth the Lord require?*" 1. *Willing service.* "*What require?*" The word signifies to ask or request. God in the law of Moses commanded many observances and enforced obedience when required; but love and veneration must be voluntary. God does not rule men like suns and stars, nor like brutes; but appeals to reason and conscience—solicits and requests our service. "*Who then is willing this day?*" etc. "*Will ye be my disciples?*" What an attitude for the Omnipotent and Eternal God to assume towards man! How lovingly and beseechingly does he request our obedience. "*But to Israel He saith, all day long (i.e., with unwearied patience) I have stretched forth My hands (like a mother calling back her child, in gracious, earnest entreaty) unto a disobedient and gainsaying (refractory, or stubborn) people.*" (Rom. x. 21.) 2. *Practical service.* Genuine religion is always practical, not mere feeling and form. It is fear, obedience, and love. (a) *To fear the Lord*, not with slavish fear—a fear which hath torment, and is opposed to love (1 Jno. iv. 18) but a filial reverence. (b) *To love Him.* Love and fear go together. Reverence in a child begets true affection. When our feelings, our hearts are right we naturally yield to God our profoundest reverence. (c) *To serve him.* When love fills our hearts, it will express itself in life. We shall instinctively cleave to God and "*walk in all His ways.*" We shall fear to offend Him and dread separation from Him. We shall *serve* God with heart and soul. Our religion will not be in word but in deed. We may suspect our religion, suspect our interest in Christ, if we have no delight in His service, no love for His person. The law must be written in our hearts, as a permanent principle and conserving force of life (Ps. xxxvii. 31.) Our service must be spiritual; our obedience free and hearty; and our love fervent and sincere.

Not by the terrors of a slave  
Do they perform his will;  
But with the noblest powers they have,  
His sweet commands fulfil.

**II. The ground on which the claim is urged.** The appeal for future loyalty is made on several grounds. Let us suggest three. 1. *It is rational.* "*What doth the Lord require; anything unreasonable, impossible, or inconsistent? Can God ask less than what is due to him? He does not "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne." "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* 2. *It is enforced by covenant.* "*The Lord thy God.*" Israel was ever reminded of this relationship and the duties which spring from it. Whatever God was in Himself He was to them; all His perfections were enlisted on their behalf. In the covenant with Christ God regards His people as specially His own and bestows upon them greater blessings. As creatures, as property, God has a right to claim us. But if His children, bought with blood, we should love Him with all our heart. If He has made solemn compacts, pledged Himself and all His resources to help, we should make no reserve whatever, but devote ourselves, body, soul and spirit unto Him. 3. *It is due from constant mercies.* He brought us into being; dignified us with understanding; sustained and redeemed our life from destruction. For us He has given His word, sent His son and opened heaven. Some return is due and should be rendered to Him. Mercies have been great, constant, and multiplied. Special



favours demand special service, as those who keep the largest farms pay the most rent. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (in providence and grace) that ye present your bodies (*i.e.* your whole selves) a living sacrifice (in contrast to dead beasts offered under law) holy, acceptable (well pleasing) to God, which is your reasonable (rational) service; *i.e.* a service befitting a rational being" (Rom. xii. 1).

**III. The needful qualification to render the service.** "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart" (ver. 16). 1. *We are naturally sinful.* Circumcision teaches that we are impure, and unfit for God and His service. We must mortify our members which are upon earth (Col. iii. 5); crucify the affections and lusts of the flesh (Gal. v. 24); renounce act of all sin and selfwill and sever ourselves from sensuality. Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). 2. *The needed qualification is a circumcised heart.* True obedience can only spring from a renewed loving heart. When enmity is subdued and affection planted within us, then God gives filial fear, or the spirit of adoption; then service is not task work. Slavery and selfishness pass away, and duty becomes hearty and enthusiastic. When love reigns in the heart, the whole man will be brought under sway. All our powers will be employed in doing the will, and promoting the glory of God. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 12, 13. *Study the clauses of this requirement.* God's exactions, if we be Christians, are our own free will offerings. What God demands is what thankful hearts should gladly give. First of all to *fear Him*. Not to be terrified, that is the natural man's religion. Unless taught of God men look upon Him with terror and alarm. Hence religion is a sepulchral and gloomy thing to them. To the Christian all is reverse. He has no alarm; he courts God's presence and feels that presence to be the inspiration of hope and joy. Next to *walk* in all his ways. All the ways proceed from one source and terminate in the same again. There are varieties of expression, but one religion. A way of righteousness a way of truth, a way of peace, and a way of pleasantness. All are different paths which God has prescribed for His people; and they that are His people are found walking in them. Walk, not to stand still, in His ways—not your own. Then "*to love Him*." If the fear enjoined were terror, it would be impossible to love. Love is the germ in the heart that blossoms and bursts into all the fragrant fruits de-

manded by God's holy law. The law, like the imperious taskmaster, says, "Give me fruit," and you cannot; but love softly, progressively, originates and develops all the fruits of the Spirit. The absence of this love is the absence of Christianity. This love, lost in the fall, regained by the cross, is the result of seeing God's love for us. The measure and extent is "all your hearts." Not more than human strength, not less than will fill the heart is required. Think of the equity of the law, and of its greatness. Not cold, calculating preference; but warm, cordial attachment—attachment not blind and unintelligible, but with all the soul. Also to *serve him*, service in the sense of worship. The word liturgy strictly means service; here service means adore, pray, and praise; worship outwardly, publicly, and privately with all the heart. We learn the essence of all true acceptable worship before God. Not material glory, ritual splendour; but depth of sincerity, intensity of love, the supremacy of God in the heart. What is the *end* of all this? First, God asks this, not for His benefit, but for our good. Is there no benefit

in meeting together in the house of God, in unloading the thankful heart in praise? When you give the greatest glory, worship, and homage to God, the reaction of it is showers of blessings, mercies, and privileges upon yourselves. God requires this in His word, in seasons of affliction and prosperity. He requires it that holy effects may be seen, and that men may feel that religion purifies. It is also good for the world. The best evidence that you are Christians is in what you feel, suffer, sacrifice, and do; not as servants obeying for reward, but as sons serving God out of affection.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Ver. 13. *Keep (shamar)* signifies to keep diligently, carefully, faithfully; as watchmen keep the city, soldiers their garrisons, or jailors their prisoners (1 Kings xx. 39; Job xii. 12). God would have His people thus to keep His commandments and statutes, and to do this on account of those high acts of favour and grace that He had shewed them; and what is this but to be a holy people, yea, a very holy people unto the Lord.—*Brooks.*

*Our duty towards God.* Consider—  
I. That we have a duty to perform towards God. A duty of—1. Holy fear.

2. Perfect obedience. 3. Love. 4. Willing service. II. That this duty is enforced by many considerations. 1. Obedience to God's commands will be to our own advantage. 2. We have been especially favoured by God; gratitude should impel us to serve Him. 3. The consequences of enmity to Him are fearful in the highest degree.—*E. Lockwood.*

Vers. 12, 13, 19. *The sum of human duty.* Its nature, basis, and motives. *cf.* "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah vi. 8).

*The reasonableness of God's law.* Many think it stern and severe, and impossible for man to obey. If God required more than man can give, this would be opposed to His word, indicate tyranny in His government, and would free man from blame. But God asks for service, not from angelic powers, but service of a nature adapted to our own. His requirements are clear as noonday, and equal as they can be, and the plea cannot be sustained. "O, house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" etc. (Ezek. xviii. 29, 30).—*A. Barnes.*

#### GOD NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.—*Verse 17.*

In this sublime description of God we have a brief phrase indicating the impartial, incorruptible, and righteous method of His government. "He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." He shows no favour, nor is he bribed in judging men. "There is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. ii. 11).

**I. In the laws of Moral Government.**—Natural laws make no discrimination, no distinction in their nature, purpose, and penalties. Nature accepts no bribes and regards no tears in her retributive dealings. There is "natural law in the spiritual world," the same kind of procedure as in the natural world. The Jew has no advantage over the Gentile. Though His chosen people, God will not tolerate sin in them any more than in other nations. Men everywhere have the same wants, are subject to the same diseases, and doomed to the same grave. "The small and the great are there, and the servant is free as his master." Spiritually "there is no difference (in their relation to God's righteous government), for all have sinned and come short (failed to attain) the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 22, 23).

**II. In the method of Salvation.**—If men are equally guilty, none are deserving, and none are saved by their own good works. He "accepteth not

the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor ; for they all are the work of His hands" (Job xxxiv. 19). If saved at all, they are saved "freely by His grace." Peter could not believe that the gospel must be offered to the Gentiles, and that they stood on the same basis of acceptance as the favoured people. "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts x. 34).

**III. In the accounts of the Judgment Day.**—This day will vindicate the righteousness of God in the rewards of the just and the punishment of the unjust. Then will the eternal principles of the Divine government be fully asserted and vindicated. There will be one impartial award, the righteous Judge "will render to every one according to his *deeds*" (Rom. ii. 6-11). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. vi. 10).

#### LOVE TO THE STRANGER.—Verse 19.

Strangers were in danger of being treated as foreigners and aliens among the Israelites. But many humane laws were enacted and repeated for their benefit. They were not merely to be tolerated, but to be respected, regarded as members of the Commonwealth—to be put on perfect equality with the Israelites. There are two reasons given for consideration to strangers.

**I. God loves the stranger.** Though great and terrible, yet He is kind and affectionate towards the helpless and oppressed. The more defenceless the greater the claim upon His compassion. "A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows is God, in His holy habitation." Kindness to the stranger has been considered such a favourite virtue that the gods have been said to disguise themselves to test human hospitality. The Bible and tradition seem to agree on this matter. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. xiii. 2). Zeus, "*the stranger's god*," suggests another title for Jehovah. "The poor committeth himself unto thee ; thou art the helper of the fatherless." Ps. x. 14, 17, 18 ; *cf.* Jer. xlix. 11 ; Hos. xiv. 3.

**II. Israelites themselves have been strangers.** "For ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Legislation has protected the orphan and the widow, but not always strangers. They have been considered outcasts and foreigners. Israel had been afflicted and distressed. They knew the bitter experience of persecution, and should therefore sympathise with others in the same condition. Our experience should teach us to regard tenderly all reduced to slavery and treated with inhumanity. "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger ; for ye know the heart (the *soul*, the feeling) of a stranger (by personal experience), seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. xxiii. 9). If Cicero could say whatever concerned humanity was not foreign to himself, what should be our feelings, when we think of the Divine Nature, the pathetic appeals of the Word, and the incarnation of Jesus Christ ? "The stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Lev. xix. 34).

Jove's special care  
Are strangers, poor and friendless.—*Odys.*



A NATION'S HONOUR.—*Verses 20, 21.*

Moses returns to his main subject, and again exhorts to reverence and obedience. God had honoured them, and deserved to be honoured by them. He was worthy in Himself, and worthy on account of what He had done. "He is thy praise and He is thy God—a nation's honour consists in God's blessing upon its past history and its present condition.

**I. God in its past history.** God is in history at all times, over-ruling all events for the accomplishment of His purpose. But few nations were blessed as Israel. 1. *In its constant prosperity* (ver. 22.) Mighty had been the increase of the people. In number, position, and dignity they were like the stars as heaven. 2. *In its continual defence.* In their deliverance and history "great and terrible things" had been done for them. England should remember her deliverances and defence in the destruction of the *Invincible Armada*, the defeat of Popish plots, and the establishment of the Protestant religion. "What one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for Thy land, before Thy people, which Thou redeemedst to Thee from Egypt, from the nations and their Gods?" (2 Sam. vii. 23.)

**II. God in its present condition.** He must still be our God, as well as our father's God. He must never be forgotten nor forsaken, but abide with us for ever. 1. *As the object of worship.* "He is thy praise," the object of praise, and regard. We must not worship our great men, nor bow down to our own nets (Heb. i. 16). If God be not recognised in public act and private life, our glory will depart. 2. *As the ground of dependence.* We must put no confidence in the wisdom of our policy, the extent of our empire, the splendour of our arms, and the abundance of our wealth. "Righteousness exalteth a nation." 3. *As the source of prosperity.* Our own skill and wisdom are vain. We can never do without God. He gives increase and success in families, churches, and nations (Acts v. 38, 39). To God we owe everything, and should dedicate everything. "Well may we think our substance due where we owe ourselves" (*Bp. Hall*). Let us cleave to God, our shield in the past and our hope for the future. "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you" (1 Sam. xii. 24).

"Without the help of God  
All is decay, delusion all,  
On which mankind rely:  
The firmament itself would fall,  
And even Nature die  
Beneath annihilation's nod,  
Without the help of God."—*W. Hayley.*

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 19. *Love the stranger.* 1. An expression of God's nature. God is love. 2. An evidence of superior legislation in Israel. 3. A duty enjoined upon us. It is *love*; not mere pity, but practical benevolence. "Never anything can be amiss, when simple-

ness and duty tender it" (*Shakespeare*).  
"A kind action is never lost."

Ver. 20. *Four aspects of obedience.* Fear, serve, cleave, and swear. Our allegiance must be public, constant and firm. If we own God as our own God

He will ever defend us. "Every one that sweareth by Him shall glory."

Ver. 21. *Thy praise.* Thy praised one (Ps. xviii. 3), or thy praiseworthy one. He is also thy chief glory and praise among all nations, who shall admire thy happiness in such a God (*Trapp*). The friendship of God a

personal honour—a constant necessity and an eternal sufficiency. Why be ashamed or afraid of Him? Why not fear Him who can increase or diminish (ver. 22), exalt or humble by His infinite power? "Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings" (Dan. ii. 47).

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER X.

Vers 1-5. *Tables.* God wrote the laws upon stone, and these stones were laid up in the ark of the testimony. But this law He writes now upon the hearts of His people; and God's will, engraved upon the sensitive and susceptible heart of a Christian, will outlast the Pyramids of Egypt, outlive the stones that came down from Mount Sinai in the hand of Moses, and endure for ever. It is a nobler thing to write the law upon human hearts, and more miraculous, than to write it with His own finger upon the dead and perishing stone.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Vers. 6-8. *Ministered.* A pious lady once amongst a party of gentlemen, by whom the worldly circumstances of ministers were made the topic of conversation, remarks were thrown out of which she could not approve. For some time silent, at last, with a dignified air and a decided tone, she put them all to silence with the words, "Well, you may say what you please concerning the situation of ministers, but let me tell you that a minister of the *Gospel* holds a more honourable office than a minister of *state*."—*Whitecross.*

Vers. 12, 13. *Love.* The centripetal force which keeps all the celestial

bodies in harmonious motion, each in its appointed orbit. What would ensue could we imagine the force to be withdrawn?—*Bowes.*

Vers. 14-17. *A great God.* Simonides, the philosopher, being requested to describe God, asked a week to think of it, after that a month, and then a year; but, being still unprepared, he declined the task, declaring that the more he thought of such a Being the less he was able to describe Him. It is said that Sir I. Newton and Dr. S. Clarke never mentioned the name of God without solemn pause. "God has two thrones—one in the highest heavens, the other in the lowest hearts" (Is. lvii. 15).

Ver. 19. *Love the stranger.* *Mercy* hath but its name for misery, and is no other thing than to lay another's misery to heart (*Binning*). In aspiring to the throne of power, the angels transgressed and fell; in presuming to come within the oracle of knowledge, man transgressed and fell; but in the pursuit towards the similitude of God's goodness and love neither man nor spirit ever transgressed or shall transgress (*Bacon*). How unsuitable is it for us, who live only by kindness (Tit. iii. 4-7), to be unkind.—*Edwards.*

#### CHAPTER XI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—1-12 develop more fully the other features of Divine Requirements, chap. x. 12. Love must be seen in perpetual observance of commands. *Keep*, Lev. viii. 35; Num. i. 53.

2. Know own, *i.e.*, ponder and lay to heart *the chastisement*, the mighty acts of God to Egypt and to Israel; the purpose of which is to *educate* (discipline) by correction and instruction, *cf.* lxx., with the word in Prov. i. 2; v. 12.

3-6 Instances given of discipline.

4. Waters. *Cf.* chap. iv. 34; Ex. xiv. 26 *sqq.*

5. All acts in guidance and protection of Israel and punishment of enemies.

6. Destruction of Korah's company specially given, *cf.* Num. xvi. 31-33. "Moses only mentions Dathan and Abiram, followers of Korah, and not Korah himself, probably from regard to his sons, who were not swallowed up by the earth with their father, but had lived to perpetuate the family." (*Keil*.) Dathan and Abiram also were more determined and audacious against Moses. All substance, *lit.* everything existing, Gen. vii. 4, which was in their following (at their feet) *cf.* Ex. xi. 8; Num. xvi. 32.

7. The reason for admonition, *cf.* ver. 2. Know God's purpose in the acts you have seen.

8, 9. This knowledge was to impel them to keep the law, that they might be spiritually strong, enter the land and live long in it. *cf.* chap. iv. 26; vi. 3.

10-12. Another motive for fidelity is added, *viz.*, the entire dependence of the Promised Land upon God for its fertility. Its richness was not like Egypt, the reward of human skill and labour but entirely the gift of God. Egypt and Canaan are distinguished in their most remarkable physical traits, the spiritual significance of which must not be overlooked. (*cf. Speaker's Commentary*.)

10. Wateredst, in two ways, *viz.*, by means of tread-wheels, working sets of pumps, and by means of artificial channels connected with reservoirs, and opened, turned, or closed by the feet. Both methods are still in use in Egypt and other similar districts of the country. (*Speaker's Commentary*.)

11. Hills mountainous. *Drinketh*, *i.e.* received its watering, the main condition of all fertility, from the rain and therefore the providence of God. (*Keil*.)

12. Careth for, *lit.* seeketh or inquireth after, *i.e.* for which God cared. Prov. xxxi. 13; Job iii. 4. LXX. Oversees. Ps. cxlii. 4; Is. lxii. 12; Jer. xxx. 17. Eyes ever under the special keeping of God.

13. Thus dependent, it behoved them to fear and obey, that these blessings might continue.

14. First autumn rain, about time of sowing from October to December, latter spring rains in March or April, which prepares ground for harvest. This rain would be given with plentiful supply of food for man and beast.

15. If Israel would be faithful.

16-17. If not obedient, God's anger would burn against them, heaven would shut up ("as a womb," Gen. xvi. 2), earth would yield no produce, and they would speedily perish, Lev. xxvi. 19, 20; Deut. xxviii. 23.

18-20. Almost a verbal repetition of chap. vi. 6-9, to impress the mind.

21. Above, *i.e.* as long as heaven continues above earth, or to all eternity, *cf.* Ps. lxxxix. 30; Job xiv. 12. "The promise of Canaan to Israel then was a perpetual promise, but also a conditiona one."

23. If faithful, God would drive out all nations. *Greater*, chap. vii. 1; ix. 1.

24. Give them the land in its length and breadth, every place within the land. Full possession in the time of Solomon.

25. So fill Canaanites with fear, that none could stand before them.

26-28. Concluding summary. Shalt put, *lit.*, give forth, utter, proclaim upon Mount Gerizim, the most southern of the two, and according to Jewish ideas, the region of light, life, and blessing (*cf. Speaker's Commentary*.) Ebal on the north side, opposite Gerizim (*cf. Stanley*. "Sinai and Palestine."

31-32. Contain a reason for the instructions and an assurance that if they observe to do, they shall cross Jordan, enter and possess the land, chap. iv. 5, 6.



## DIVINE DISCIPLINE IN HUMAN LIFE.—Vers. 1-9.

God frequently repeated His commands, to meet the child-like character and condition of Israel, and to check their proneness to forget and rebel. Love to God was to show itself in distinct perception and perpetual obedience to His statutes. To awaken this love they must trace God's dealings with them, and realise that these dealings were "chastisement," discipline to train them in His service.

**I. Divine discipline displayed in various ways.** "All the great acts" which God performed have a bright and a dark side—were filled with mercy or judgment according to the moral condition of the spectator. 1. *In acts of love to God's people.* The miracles of deliverance, guidance, and defence were intended to wean from sin and awaken right feeling. Their afflictions were corrections, less than their rebellion deserved, which taught them to pray and depend upon God. The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor Christians perfected without adversity. 2. *In acts of judgment to God's enemies.* The "mighty hand" destroyed Israel's foes and chastised the oppressor. Proofs of God's power and purpose were seen on every hand. The overthrow of pride and the defence of the weak; the bestowment of good and the infliction of evil were a process of education. God was seen the friend of His people, and the judge of His enemies; training by peculiar discipline, and warning by solemn visitations. Thus life is a school. The great events of life are appointed and directed by God to train us for service.

There is a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we will.

**II. Divine discipline to be recognised in the events of life.** "Know ye this day." Men are unable, unwilling to learn. Life to them is ordinary, accidental, or without value. We must take note, ponder this truth, and discern God's purpose in our life. If we could see "the end of the Lord" in his dealings with us and others, we should murmur less, and be more thankful and resigned. We quench "the light of life" by our "theory of life." It is not the want of greater miracles, but of perception of spiritual insight, that leads us to forget God and misinterpret His providence. Wherever the hand of God is, *there* is miracle and meaning if we desire to learn. All processes of life point to mental and moral development. It is our wisdom, our interest to believe and co-operate. "I would rather do the will of God than work miracles," said Luther. "Consider (*i.e.*, carefully regard) the work of God" (Ecc. vii. 13). "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord" (Ps. cvii. 43).

**III. The recognition of this Divine discipline in life to be shown in cheerful obedience.**—Because "your eyes have seen" the mighty acts of God and the design for which they were done. "Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments" (verse 8). The older generation had witnessed more than others, enjoyed greater advantages, and were therefore put under deeper obligation. Those who have seen signal events, who live in remarkable times, times of revival, judgments, and deliverances, are more indebted to God and doubly guilty in their disobedience. Duty must be measured by privilege. The lessons of our life must be taught to others, and embodied in our character and conduct. If unfaithful and indifferent how great will be our punishment. Exalted to heaven, we may be cast down to hell!

IV. The consequences of this obedience are manifold. If Israel would hear, rightly interpret, and obey the voice of God in the events of their history, the results would be manifold. 1. *Spiritual strength*. "That ye may be strong" (verse 8). As we gain strength naturally by walking, so spiritually we become strong by obedience. God is the source of all power, and by dependence upon Him that power is ours. Unbelief is infirmity; joyful trust gives strength for work and welfare. 2. *Possession of Canaan*. "And possess the land." Earthly possessions and distinctions are reserved for those who are trained for them. Strength derived from obedience inspires with courage to gain new dominions. Those strong in the Lord are resistless, and drive before them nations greater and mightier than they. 3. *Length of life*. "That ye may prolong your days." Long life to individuals or nations, the perpetuation of the Church or a godly seed, depend upon God more than natural causes. Disobedience in its nature and in the judgments of God upon it, brings to untimely ends. Obedience contributes to the length and the enjoyment of life. "The fear of the Lord longeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened."

THE OVERTHROW OF CONSPIRATORS.—Verse 6.

This is specially mentioned as one instance of those "acts" which had been done to warn and instruct. The words may be compared with Num. xvi., and the following outline will be suggested. 1. *The sin of the conspirators*. Korah sought not to abolish the distinction between Levites and the people; but to secure the chief dignity for himself. They rebelled against Moses (Num. xvi. 2, 3); refused the text proposed (6 and 7); refused to leave their tents (verse 2), and reproached Moses as if responsible for their protracted sojourn in the wilderness. "Ambition o'erleaps itself." The fate of Nadab and Abihu should have warned them. "God hath a special indignation at pride above all sins," says Bp. Hall. "A man's pride shall bring him low (cf. Prov. xxix. 23; xi. 2; xvii. 19). 2. *The overthrow of the conspirators*. Opposition to God's authority is highly displeasing, when determined and open. The destruction was: 1. Sudden. "The earth opened." 2. Supernatural. This not in a country undermined with subterranean fire, but in the sandy desert; where earthquakes seldom happen, and are little expected. 3. Complete. "Swallowed them up and their households, tents, and all possessions." 4. Admonitory. "In the midst of all Israel." It vindicated the rights of Moses, and is a warning for all ages. "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change; for their calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruin of them both?" (Prov. xxiv. 21, 22.)

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *Not seen*. He speaks to them as to eye-witnesses, and those that have such evidence and self-experience are usually more affected than those that have things by hear-say only. "Mine eye affects my heart." (Lam. iii. 51.)—*Trapp*.

Ver. 3. *His miracles*. Acts of

power, acts of publicity, yet unable to convert the soul.

Ver. 5. *Did to you*. A personal diary, to help our weak memory and stir up our cold hearts. "Forget not all His benefits."

Ver. 6. *Dathan and Abiram*. Place hunters in their object, method and

punishment. Their history illustrative of the *perils of bad company*. "Unity with wicked companions is one of the strongest chains of hell, and binds us to a participation both of sin and punishment." — (*Sibbs*.) "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces." (Is. viii. 9; cf. Prov. xi. 21; Josh. ix. 1, 2.)

Vers. 3-9. 1. God has a people among men. 2. He separates this people from men in various ways. 3. He unites them in bonds of fellowship. 4. He trains them to love Him. 5. He guides them to rest.

Vers. 4-6. *Nature subservient to God's purposes*. 1. In the destruction of His enemies. 2. In the deliverance of His people. "It was a marvel that the waters opened; it was no wonder that they shut again; for the retiring and flowing was natural. It was no less marvel that the earth opened, but more marvel that it shut again, because it had no natural disposition to meet when it was divided. Now might Israel see they had to do with a God that could revenge with ease." — (*Bp. Hall*.) All the elements of nature under God's control, hence the folly of offending one who can easily and awfully punish.

#### EGYPT AND CANAAN.—Verses 10-12.

Moses adduces another motive for obedience to God's law founded upon the peculiar nature of the land. It was "a land flowing with milk and honey;" yet its richness was not, as was that of Egypt, the reward of human skill, but simply and entirely the gift of God, and resulted from the rain of heaven. Hence on account of dependence upon God they should not forget Him. The two countries are—1. *A proof of natural variety*. In Egypt there was little or no rain, the people depended upon the yearly overflow of the Nile. Its waters were stored up by artificial means and its fields irrigated by human toil. Canaan was a land of hills and natural reservoirs. It was watered by rains from heaven and depended not on the toil and skill of man to fertilise it. In physical beauty and natural products, in situation and configuration, territories differ and display the wisdom and benevolence of God. 2. *An indication of moral purpose*. Some countries are more suited than others to train a people. God has located nations and fixed the habitation of individuals that they might seek and serve Him (Acts xvii. 26-27). Canaan seems in every sense best suited to foster dependence upon God and train Israel for their high destiny. Hence in natural scenery, in the structure of the hill and the extent of the valley; in the course of the river and the climate of the sky, we have proof of Divine goodness and elements for religious training. 3. *An illustration of special providence*. God was in Egypt in every place. But Canaan was a land on which Jehovah fixed his special attention and regard. He watched it with unceasing care, and sustained it by constant favour. He gave early rain for seed time, and latter rain for harvest. Its inhabitants had no need to slave like Egyptians. Fidelity to God would always secure their prosperity and happiness. Thus do we find moral purpose, wonderful providence in natural surroundings, and the forces of nature employed in spiritual training.

"Read Nature; Nature is a friend to truth;  
Nature is Christian, preaches to mankind;  
And bids dead matter aid us in our creed."—*Young*.



THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MORAL CHARACTER AND MATERIAL PROSPERITY.—  
Verses 10-17.

If Israel would serve God and be faithful, He would give them plentiful supplies for man and beast. But, on the other hand, if they turned away from Him, He would withhold the rain, deprive them of harvest, and they would utterly perish. Material blessings depended upon moral conduct.

**I. There is a moral purpose in the bestowment of material prosperity.**—God in bestowing physical good designs the moral training of men. Rain from heaven and fruitful seasons testify to His goodness, and should excite to gratitude (Acts xiv. 17). The greater the blessing the higher is the end in view. Canaan was given to Israel for a special purpose. The blessings of this land and of all lands are too uniform to spring from chance; too rich and manifold for human labour to produce, and too wisely adapted to human wants to be given without moral purpose.

**II. The continuation of material prosperity depends upon moral conduct.**—The sources of prosperity are under the control of the Creator. He can seal the earth and shut up the heavens. The influence of imperial power and the excellency of legislation can neither create a sunbeam nor command a shower. Happiness, all kinds of prosperity, would accrue to the Israelites by a faithful observance of the commands of God, but terrible were the punishments which awaited them if they transgressed (*cf.* Lev. xxvi. 3-17; Am. iv. 7).

**III. Material prosperity will affect moral character for good or evil.** If it teaches dependence upon God, creates gratitude, and leads to consecration to Him, it will be a blessing; but if it weans our hearts from Him, leads to proud self-reliance, it will be a curse to us. "Take heed" (verse 16). "According to their pasture so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me" (Hos. xiii. 16).

THE BIBLE THE FAMILY BOOK.—Verses 18-21.

These words of warning must be deeply impressed upon their own minds, taught to their children, and perpetuated from one generation to another. They are partly a verbal repetition of chap. vi. 6-9. The sense is, "Keep the covenant faithfully, and so shall your own and your children's days be multiplied as long as the heaven covers the earth."—*Speaker's Commentary.*

**I. The words to be treasured up in the heart.** "Lay up these words in your heart." If we forget the words, we shall neglect the things. There must be personal reception, esteem, and influence. We must weigh them over, ponder them in our hearts. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart."

**II. The words to be taught to posterity.** "Ye shall teach them your children." What we love and treasure up for ourselves must be communicated to others. Children have the first claim. Parental responsibility can never be shifted on to the Sunday school or schoolmaster. The words of God must be elements of family instruction. "The home school" must be gathered together, trained, and made an institution to preserve and spread true religion. A large portion of the Bible is intelligible to children, and full of interest for them. Read the Family Bible and engage in family prayer. "Train up (*lit., imitate, dedicate,*

as house (Num. vii. 10, 11 ;) or temple (1 King viii. 63), a child in the way (his way) he should go ; and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. xxii. 6.)

**III. The words to result in open profession by the household.** They are to be written on doorposts and gates to be constantly before the eyes of others. The whole family or household are interested, indoctrinated and collectively identified with public profession. The preservation of religion and the welfare of the community demand "a church in the house." "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law."

THE FOUR PLACES IN WHICH A GOOD MAN KEEPS GOD'S TRUTH.—*Verse 18.*

**I. The first place is the heart.** The heart furnishes metal for the mind. 1. Lay them up like treasure in a chest ; for the words of God are the family plate of believers—the heirlooms of the household of faith. 2. Like books in a library ready for reference. 3. Like clothes in a wardrobe ready for all weathers ; for summer's sunshine and winter's storms. The truth of God should be the garment of the soul. 4. Like conserves of precious fruit, gathered in the time of plenty, to be eaten in time of scarcity. 5. Like knowledge hidden but not lost. 6. As guides. It is useful to have a map to consult if we desire to know a country ; so these words are for meditation and use. 7. In the heart not like misers' hoards, but like bankers' gold, wealth itself, and the means of creating more.

**II. The second place in which we are to lay up these words is in heart and soul.** Religion should have a place in our affections and in our thoughts. 1. For the soul is the seat of thought or understanding. Some do not think and attempt not to understand. 2. The soul is the seat and place of the mind life. 3. The soul is the seat of conviction, and conviction is mental activity and independence.

**III.** Now the relations of the text change, and this third head brings us to the second department. The word revealed in the heart and soul refers to moral and mental power of man. In this third particular religion is brought into notice ; "*therefore shall ye bind these words for a sign upon your hand.*" As much as to say, realise them in your life. If you have any religion, use it. Christians should carry their light like the old blind man, who always carried a bright lantern when he went out on dark nights. When laughed at and called a foolish old fellow, "Oh," said he, "I carry it to prevent people stumbling over me." Bind these words, 1. Like a glove on the hand for defence. It would be fearful for the hedger and ditcher to grapple prickly thorns with his ungloved hand. 2. A sign on the hand like a gauntlet. These words are signs of the side on which we stand, and the conflict we intend to wage. 3. For a sign, like a tool in the hand ; something to work, to build with. 4. For a sign like a sword in the hand. "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God." Remarkable have been the encounters in which this sword has been wielded with power. None more remarkable than the temptation of our Lord in the wilderness.

**IV. There is yet a fourth place, where the good man keeps God's truth.** That they may be as frontlets between the eyes. The Jews forgot the spirit, and gave a literal interpretation to the words. They must be before us. We must profess, avow the words. 1. The words are to be a source of pride, for what is worn on the head, is a thing we are proud of. Be proud not of yourself, of

your attainments, but of that which has conferred upon you the possession of these words. 2. As frontlets, giving dignity, ornament, rank, and elevation—an ornament of grace about the head, chains of gold about the neck, wreathed into a coronet, diadem and crown. 3. As frontlets a source of protection. Wear them as helmets are worn. “For a helmet the hope of Salvation.” These are principles of a religious life, the principles which the great Hebrew law-giver beheld as lying at the foundation of all prosperous states and all truly noble personal character.—*The Preacher’s Lantern*, Vol. II.

THE DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH.—*Verse 21.*

I. When may our days be said to be “as the days of heaven upon the earth?” When—1. We enjoy much of a sense of the Divine presence, and live in the contemplation of the glorious perfections of God. 2. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. 3. We enjoy a spirit of gratitude and praise. 4. We possess brotherly love and enjoy the happiness of fellowship with the saints. 5. We obtain great victories over sin and have intense love of purity. 6. We cheerfully obey God’s commands. 7. We frequently meditate on the heavenly state.

II. What course should we take in order that our days may be as such? We must—1. Be partakers of vital faith in Christ, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds. 2. Make the glory of God our highest aim. 3. Wean our hearts from earthly things. 4. Watch against grieving the Holy Spirit. 5. Be perpetually employed for God, and resign our wills to His.—*Dr. Ryland*.

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 10-12. *The distinguished honour of Canaan.* 1. Its great natural beauties. 2. Its special guardianship by Jehovah. “Careth for”—In its preparation for the people, its wonderful products and various seasons.

Vers. 13-15. *Rain.* 1. In its *origin*. “I will give you the rain.” Not therefore from fixed laws, nor from idols. Jupiter could not create dark clouds and distil them in blessings. “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?” 2. In its *effects*. “Corn, wine, and oil.” Crops ripen for the sickle. The vine with its clusters, and grass for cattle in due season. All benefactions of God. 3. In its *continuance*. “It tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” It depends upon the power and goodness of God; withheld or bestowed in times and quantities according to the conduct of the people (Joel, ii. 23; Zech. x. i; Deut. xxviii. 12). “How easy were it for God to starve us all by denying us a harvest or two.”—*Trapp*.

Ver. 16. *A caution against deception.* We notice here—I. An evil anticipation—that of having the heart deceived. The probability of such deception may be inferred from the deceitfulness: (1.) Of human knowledge. (2.) The heart. (3.) Sin. (4.) The world. (5.) The devil. II. a caution urged against it: “Take heed to yourselves,” by (1.) Being sensible of your extreme danger. (2.) Seeking for the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit. (3.) The constant practice of self-examination. (4.) Watching over yourselves.—*Biblical Museum*.

Ver. 17. I. *Dreadful evils.* 1. The Lord’s wrath kindled. 2. Heaven shut up. “The keys of heaven, of the heart, of the womb, and of the grave, God keeps and carries under His own girdle” (*Trapp*). II. *How brought on.* By disobedience, self-deception, and idolatry, ver. 16; cf. Josh. xxiii. 16; Jer. xvii. 9; Job xxxi. 27.

Vers. 18-21. *The Bible the rule of*



*human life.* I. Its power over private life. 1. In the heart, governing feeling and affection. 2. In the soul, controlling thought and meditations. II. Its power over public life. Before the eyes to direct; in the hand prompting to action and service; confessed in the family; and avowed before the world, in conversation by the way, and inscription on the gates, etc. "A single book has saved me," said M. L. Bautin, but that book is not of human origin."—"It is this belief (in the Bible), the fruits of deep meditation, which has served me as the guide of my moral and literary life. I have found it a capital safely invested and richly productive of interest, although I have

sometimes made but a bad use of it" (*Goethe*).

He alone who hath  
The Bible need not stray;  
Yet he who hath and will not give  
That light of life to all who live,  
Himself shall lose the way.

*J. Montgomery.*

*The benefits of obedience.* 1. In bracing up, engaging, and cultivating all the powers of heart and mind. 2. In testifying for God in the family and before the world. 3. In securing personal advantage, national existence and permanent possessions. These lessons should we remember "Write them upon the door." "Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (*Hab. ii. 2*).

### LOYAL OBEDIENCE THE WAY TO NATIONAL PROSPERITY.—*Verses 22-25.*

To secure God's help in gaining and keeping the land it was needful to obey him. Obedience would introduce them into their inheritance, enlarge their boundaries, and make them valiant over every foe.

**I. The national advantages secured.** Many great promises are given. 1. *Conquest of enemies.* "Then will the Lord drive out all these nations." The strongest foes, mightier and greater than ourselves will be subdued if we trust in God. With him we can drive away rebels within or foes without our borders. Gideon over the Medianites, Hezekiah over Sennacherib, and England over the Armada were victorious through God. 2. *Enlargement of territory.* When nations were driven out of Canaan, Israel would grow numerous, and spread beyond it. Every place on which the soles of their feet should tread would be their own. Territories are not gained and kept by war, alliance of commerce, and human might. They are the gift of God, for the welfare of which the possessors are responsible. 3. *Security of possession.* It is one thing to get and another to keep. Nations have gained and lost their dominions. Reliance upon God is better than valiant soldiers and mighty ships. 4. *Moral supremacy.* God would lay the dread of Israel upon others. Nations would be afraid, be unable to touch them if they loved him. Their conquest would be easy, and their possession secure and permanent. Moral power is better than military power. Righteousness exalts a nation, gives more influence than imperial armies and extensive wealth. Let nations covet this, let Christian churches be clad with this; then no enemy will dare to attack, and no traitor within can weaken. "Salvation will God appoint for wall and bulwarks."

**II. The method of securing the advantages.** Nations form alliances—co-operate in aggressive war to gain their ends. How different the principles of the Mosaic legislation. In itself, Israel was a match for no warlike nation; in loyalty to God it was superior to all. "Only diligently keep all these commandments," and then would they rise in material prosperity and moral grandeur. 1. *Diligent obedience.* "Diligently keep." Excellence, individual or national, is beyond the reach of indolence. It is diligent, energetic obedience to right that makes rich in self-culture, social influence and national progress. 2. *Hearty obedience.* The affections must be enlisted; no mechanical, slavish

service. "I love the service of my God ; like the bird, I fly at liberty on the wings of obedience to His holy will" (*Dr. Chalmers*). "Love the Lord your God." 3. *Constant obedience*. "Cleave unto Him." We must be united—*cemented* to Him in soul, mind, and strength ; never be dissolved by selfishness or distrust. This therefore is the way to prosperity in nations and churches. Cleave to right, rely upon God, and He will give valiant hearts, speed true progress and elevate above danger. But "the nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

### FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE THE WAY OF PROGRESS AND SAFETY.

**I. This is a declaration of God's will.** It is not taught by politicians or learned in schools of philosophy. Divine counsels excel human laws. In the Bible we are taught that the fear of God is the surest foundation of social happiness and public security.

**II. This is a fact in Christian experience.** We know by experience that we can only go forward in knowledge and holiness—only conquer temptations and sins by faithful reliance upon God and constant obedience to His commands. The history of Israel and of all nations confirms the truth. When God has been forsaken and His authority defied, the bonds of society have been broken, thrones have been shaken, and empires rift asunder.

**III. This is a law of Christian effort.** Without strength there can be no effort, and without obedience there can be no strength. "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." In benevolent aims and evangelistic works, we only succeed and reap the fruits of our labour by walking "in all His ways." Be strong all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work ; for I am with you saith the Lord of Hosts."

### THE IMPORTANT CHOICE.—*Verses 26–30.*

Moses now shows that a blessing or a curse depends upon their conduct. If they obey a blessing will rest upon them : if they disobey a curse. From the frowning peaks of Ebal or the sunny sides of Gerizim their condition will be decided. Before they enter the land the choice must be made. Which shall it be ?

**I. The choice to be made.** Carefully examine the words and discover. 1. *It is plainly revealed.* We cannot obey a rule we do not understand. There may be mysteries in the Bible, but there is no mystery about the commandments. Duties are plain and easily understood. "I set before you." 2. *It is practicable.* A law whose demands are impossible is a contradiction. God's commands are all practicable. But we must judge them not by infirmities of the flesh, but the attainments of saints, the energy of grace and the power of God. 3. *It is voluntary.* Force makes hypocrites, never any genuine Christians. Obedience must be free. There must be no constraint in this choice. 4. *It is urgent.* "This day." It must be done. The more difficult will it be the longer the delay. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve."

**II. The reasons for decision.** There is no reason, no excuse whatever for indecision. 1. *God demands decision.* All His claims are reasonable. He is supreme and should be obeyed ; good, perfectly good in Himself and the author of all good in others. "If the Lord be God follow Him !" 2. *Indecision is*

*most mischievous.* If obedience be profitable, if God's service conduces to happiness, then indecision is unprofitable and mischievous. (a) *Mischievous in its nature.* It withholds from God the gratitude and service which are due to him. It admits and encourages rivals with God, and therefore implies rebellion and treason. (b) *Mischievous in its tendency.* Wicked men may be blind to their own faults, but they understand what God's servants should be; speak reproachfully of them and become hardened in their sins through mere pretensions in religion. (c) *Mischievous in its effects.* It pays some compliment to religion and begets hope which is delusive. Those who are not obedient, entirely decided for God on earth, will be disowned in a future state. 3. *Indecision is most foolish.* It is not acceptable to God, but exposes to his censure and wrath, to the upbraidings of conscience and the danger of hell. Consider these things and decide. "See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. (Deut. xxx. 1-15.)

### THE SOLEMN ALTERNATIVE.—Verses 26-30.

**I. The things to be chosen.** Life or death, God or sin, heaven or hell. Not education, trade or profession; but a much more solemn and momentous choice. The gospel offers life and death. One must be chosen. There is no alternative whatever.

**II. The medium through which they are given.** Two mountains were selected from which the announcement was to go forth in solemn ceremony, and "as it were transfer them to the land to be apportioned to its inhabitants according to their attitude towards the Lord their God."—(*Keil.*) cf. chap. xxvii. 14. Learn from this. 1. That nature may remind of God in its blessing or curse, fruitfulness or barrenness. 2. That nature may be affected by the moral character and moral conduct of a population. 3. That nature may warn men, co-operate with God, and be helpful to His cause.

**III. The consequences involved in the choice.** 1. God served or refused and thus insulted or honoured. 2. The people blessed or cursed. How miserable is life spent under the dominion of guilt, the curse of God and the fear of torment! How happy and glorious is life devoted to God and His service! "Happy while on earth you live, mightier joys ordained to know."

### THE LAND OF PROMISE.—Verses 31, 32.

Its physical features have been described. Palestine was always coveted by surrounding nations for its excellence and beauty, its products and position. It thus becomes a type of the inheritance reserved for the righteous.

**I. The nature of its enjoyments.** The land was gloriously privileged by its exemption from evil, and its enjoyment of good. 1. *Perfect security.* Victory over enemies was complete, and God's people are ever under His protection. "It stands securely high, indissolubly sure." 2. *Undisturbed rest.* "Dwell therein." Conflict and toil over; unbroken, and eternal peace enjoyed. "My chief conception of heaven is perfect rest" said Robt. Hall. The "Saints' everlasting rest." 3. *Everlasting joy.* In the presence, friendship, and service of God. There we "shall ever be with the Lord."

"O ye blest scenes of permanent delight!  
Full without measure! lasting beyond bound!  
A perpetuity of bliss, is bliss."—(*Young.*)



II. The method of its possession. This is distinctly revealed. 1. *By faith in the Leader.* Israel had to "observe to do all the statutes." Our daily life must be a walk with God and keeping His commandments. 2. *By crossing Jordan.* "Ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land." It is "the home beyond," and the river cannot be avoided. "There was no bridge to go over, and the river was very deep," says Bunyan. But God can divide the waters and give a safe passage. 3. *By receiving it as a gratuity.* "Which the Lord your God giveth you." We cannot buy this inheritance. It is the land of promise, and will be given to all who believe and seek it in Christ. He is "the way" to heaven, "the truth" to direct in the way, and "the life" to help us in walking in it when found. (John xiv. 6.)

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 22, 23. 1. *The service commanded.* Man made to serve and can only be happy in loyal obedience to God. This service should be diligent, loving, active and constant. 2. *The rewards bestowed.* Subjugation of nations and secure possessions of the land. *Walk in all His ways.* As God requires in conformity to His word. *Without delay.* (Job xxii. 21; Ps. cxix. 59, 60.) *Courageously,* without fear. (Ps. cxvi. 18, 19; Is. li. 7, 8.) *Peseveringly,* without declension. (Job xxiii. 11, 12; Num. xiv. 24.) *Closely,* with holy fervour and joyful hope.

people think they can make a compromise; that they need not be intensely Christian, as they are not, and will not be intensely worldly. If they do so, it is not really an alteration of their state, but a deception of themselves. There is no alternative between a blessing high as the throne of Deity, and a curse deep and terrible as the nethermost hell. You must take the sunshine or the shadow—the evil or the good—the "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom;" or the withering sentence, "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire."—*Dr. Cumming.*

Vers. 26–28. 1. What is *the blessing set before us*? The blessing of him whose sins are forgiven, who lives in God's favour and dies in peace. The blessing is lost through sin and the way to regain it; but revealed in Christ, made known in scripture and taught, illustrated and explained in every page almost. 2. What is *the curse*? Just this, "The soul that sins shall die." "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written, etc." The consequences of sin here and the punishments of sin hereafter. 3. What is the way to *escape the curse*? It is set forth plainly in the Bible—in Christ the way, the truth and the life. By the death of Christ we are delivered from sin, redeemed from the curse, and by His obedience entitled to a blessing. 4. Which will you choose? Some

Ver. 32. *The course of life urged.* 1. Attentive in its object, "observe." 2. Divine in its origin, "I set before you." 3. Comprehensive in its demands, "all the statutes and judgments." 4. Energetic in its nature "to do." 5. Prompt in its actions, "to-day." 6. Beneficial in its results, "In matters of great concern, and which must be done; there is no surer argument of a weak mind than irresolution, to be undetermined when the case is so plain and the necessity so urgent. To be always intending to live a new life, but never to find time to set about it, this is as if a man should put off eating and drinking and sleeping from one day to another, until he is starved and destroyed."—(*Tillotson.*)

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 2. *Chastisement.* Happy is that condition, which forces us to trust only in God, and to be in the hand of His providence. Afflictions dispose us to pray; and we are sure to want nothing if we find God in prayer.—*Bp. Wilson.*

Ver. 3-5. *His acts.* To those the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened, and the avenues of their hearts opened, to discern and adore the perfections of God, how manifold are the instances which occur of the providence of God in interfering to direct the course of human events towards a salutary end; to make afflictions of men the bye-path to enjoyment; out of evils temporal and transitory to produce substantial and permanent good.—*Bp. Mant.*

Vers. 6-7. *Dathan.* The earth could no longer bear up under the weight of these rebels and ingrates. God's patience was exhausted when they began to assail his servants, for his children are very dear to him, and he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye.—*Spurgeon.* This element was not used to such morsels. It devours the carcasses of men; but bodies informed with living souls never before. To have seen them struck dead upon the earth had been fearful; but to see the earth at once their executioner and grave, was more horrible.—*Bp. Hall.*

Vers. 10-15. *Rain.* Mr. Lothian, an English farmer, who was struck during his journey from Joppa to Jerusalem by not seeing a blade of grass, where even in the poorest localities of Britain some wild vegetation is found, directed his attention particularly to the subject, and pursued the enquiry during a month's residence in Jerusalem, where he learned that a miserably quantity of milk is daily sold to the inhabitants at a dear rate, and that chiefly asses' milk. "Most clearly," says he, "did I perceive that the

barrenness of large portions of the country was owing to the cessation of the early and latter rain, and that the absence of grass and flowers make it no longer the land (v. 9) flowing with milk and honey."—*Crit. and Exper. Com.*

Vers. 10-17. *Keep my commandments and I will send grass.* The prosperity of a country depends, not on the abundance of its revenues, nor on the strength of its fortifications, nor on the beauty of its public buildings; but it consists in the number of its cultivated citizens, in its men of education, enlightenment and character; here are to be found its true interest, its chief strength, its real power.—*Luther.*

Ver. 16. *Be not deceived.* Deceit is only a game played by small minds.—*Corneille.* No real greatness can long co-exist with deceit.—*S. T. Coleridge.*

Vers. 18-21. *Teach.* The sacred books of the ancient Persians say—If you would be holy, instruct your children, because all the good acts they perform will be imputed to you.—*Montesquien.* We have a thorough belief that the great secret of training lies in always regarding the child as immortal. The moment we forget this we scheme and arrange as though the child had to live only upon earth and then our plans not being commensurate with the vastness of their object will necessarily be inadequate to secure its good. Educate on the principle that you educate for eternity, otherwise it is impossible to produce a beneficial result.—*Canon Melvill.*

Ver. 21. *Many days.*

To be is better far than not to be.

*Dr. Sewell.*

This life is the childhood of eternity.

*Archbp. Manning.*

Ver. 22. *Keep.* Obedience, promptly,

fully given, is the most beautiful thing that walks on earth.—*Dr. Raleigh*. It is the only satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of our profession.—*Bridges*.

The path of duty is the way to glory.  
*Tennyson*.

Ver. 25. *Stand*. A man in the right, with God on his side, is in the majority, though he be alone, for God is multitudinous above all populations of the earth.—*Beecher*.

Vers. 26-28. *Blessing*. As bliss is happiness in the highest degree, it can only be given by a God, and enjoyed by a saint.—*E. Davies*. *Curses*. They are not merely imprecations, impotent and fruitless desires; they carry

their effects with them, and are attended with all the miseries denounced by God.—*Cruden*. Our actions must clothe us with an immortality loathsome or glorious.—*Colton*.

Ver. 31. *Shall possess*. Possibilities are as infinite as God's power.—*Dr. South*.

Ver. 32. *Do this day*. There is no work on earth easier than the true service of God.—*Luther*. God counts that free service which love dictates, and not necessity.—*St. Augustine*. The carrying on the affairs of the day that lies before us.—*Goethe*.

Defer not till to-morrow to be wise,  
To-morrow's sun to thee may never rise.

## CHAPTER XII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Moses now begins an exposition of the principal laws which must govern the people in their ecclesiastical, civil, and domestic life in Canaan. The religious life of Israel is described first. In this chapter a place for God's worship is chosen, and the right method pointed out.

2. Destroy all "places" of idolatry. Hills and elevated spots they imagined were nearer heaven. Green trees and shades of foliage or wood inspired awe.

3. Monuments of idolatry destroyed. Altars, piles of turf, or small stones. Pillars, rude blocks of coloured stone used before the art of sculpture was known. Groves, *lit.* idol, pillars of wood. (*cf.* chap. vii. 5, and xvi. 21.) Names, every trace of existence.

4-5. Not do, as idolaters worship in what place and in what way you think fit. God chose the places and in these places alone did He put His name, *i.e.*, manifest his presence. To these appointed places must they resort (*seek cf.* 2 Chron. 1-5), to offer gifts and sacrifices. The various kinds of which are given "in order to enforce the order that each and every one of them is to be offered at the sanctuary, and nowhere else."

6. *First*, two chief altar offerings. Burnt offerings and sacrifices with which meat offerings and drink offerings were united. (Num. xv. 4.) *Second*, tithes and heave offerings types of field produce and cattle (Lev. xxvii. 30-33; Num. xviii. 21-24), heave offerings, free gifts of love in addition to legal offerings. *Third*, vows and free will offerings, in consequence of vows or spontaneous impulse. (Lev. vii. 16; xxii. 21; Num. xv. 3; xxix. 39.) *Fourth*, firstlings of herds and flocks. (*cf.* Ex. xiii. 2; Num. xviii. 5.)

7. Eat, many injunctions had been allowed to lie in abeyance in their migratory condition, now the whole ritual would be obligatory. The sacrificial feast was to accompany certain offerings, put hand, all undertaken or acquired by activity. (*cf.* Gen. iii. 22; Isa. xi. 14.)

8, 9. Reason for these instructions, for up to this time every one had done what he thought right, because they were not in possession of the inheritance.

10, 11. But when settled in the land a certain order and a fixed locality should be determined. Choice vows, *lit.*, the choice of your vows, the vows of your choice, voluntary. (Lev. xxii. 21; Num. 3, 8.)



12. **Rejoice.** Joy to be the distinctive feature of all sacrificial meals, to be shared by sons and daughters, and by slaves (menservants and maidservants). **No part.** Levites at *gates*, i.e., in towns and hamlets (Ex. xx. 10) resembled strangers, and had no share in the land as hereditary property. "The repeated injunction to invite the Levites to the sacrificial meals is not at variance with Num. xviii. 21, where the tithes are assigned to the tribe of Levi for their maintenance."—*Keil*.

13, 14. Moses sums up instructions. They must beware of offering sacrifices in every place they thought fit, especially *burnt offering*, the chief offering.

15. In the wilderness animals for food were slain at the door of the tabernacle. (Lev. xvii. 3-6.) This prohibition, designed to gather them round one centre, and to cut off private idolatrous rites, was now to be relaxed. When the people were scattered they might slay at their houses (gates). **Lusteth** after, not in a bad sense, but means simply to will or choose. **According**, in proportion to means and condition. **Unclean**, as no longer consecrated as sacrifices. "The ceremonial distinctions do not apply in such cases, any more than to 'the roebuck' (or gazelle) 'and hart,' animals allowed for food but not for sacrifice."—*Speak. Com.*

16. **Blood** forbidden to be eaten (Lev. xvii. 10) was poured as water upon the earth and sucked in.

17-19. Sacrificial meals could only be held at the sanctuary. Servants and foreign slaves were to participate with them; the Levites especially were not to be forgotten.

20. These rules were to be in force when God would enlarge their border. If too far off (ver. 21) to come, the allowance in verses 15, 16, is repeated, and the reason of it given. **Be sure**, (ver. 23) *lit.*, be strong, steadfast, determined to resist temptation to eat blood—a temptation to which they were specially exposed, probably.

23-24. The law relating to blood as in ver. 16.

26. **Holy things**, tithes, etc., as in ver. 17; not tithes for Levites, but special gifts of thankfulness and piety to be presented as peace offerings at the sanctuary. *Vows.* (Gen. xxviii. 20.)

27. The flesh and blood of burnt offerings were to be put upon the *altar*. (Lev. i. 5-9.) The blood of sacrifices in the ritual of the peace offering was poured out. (Lev. iii. 2, 8, 13.) *Eat.* (Lev. vii. 11.)

28. The closing admonition in expansion of ver. 25. (*cf.* chap. xi. 21.)

29-32. A reference to the beginning (ver. 2), and a warning against Canaanitish idolatry. **Heed.** Be not ensnared by the worship of the local deities, the neglect of which was thought would bring misfortune. (*cf.* 2 Kings xvii. 26.) **The fire.** The heathens prepare all kinds of abominations for their gods which Jehovah hates. They even burn their children to their idols. (Lev. xviii.; Jer. xxxii. 35.) **Observe.** This verse is best taken "as an intermediate link, closing what goes before, and introductory to what follows."—*Keil*.

### THE LAWS OF DIVINE WORSHIP.—*Verses 1-32.*

"Having thus rehearsed the Decalogue and enforced its leading principles, Moses now passes on to apply those principles to the ecclesiastical, civil, and social life of the people. Fourteen chapters are thus occupied. Many particulars are peculiar to the law given in Deuteronomy. The Sinaitic legislation was nearly forty years old, and had been given under conditions of time, place, and circumstances very different. Canaan was in sight, the legislator himself was about to be withdrawn, and in the ripeness of his wisdom he now completes his work by enlarging, explaining, modifying and supplementing under Divine guidance the code which he promulgated in earlier days. Moses fitly begins with regulations pertaining to the worship of the Israelites during their settled life in Canaan" (*cf. Speak. Com.*). Taking the whole chapter, we get the following outline—

**I. Worship as a protest to heathen idolatry.** The invasion of Canaan was a new period in life—a period of true service and purified character. 1. *Idolatry was not to be imitated* (ver. 29-31). They must shun superstitions, and take

heed not to be ensnared by their prevalence and popularity. 2. *Idolatry was to be destroyed* (ver. 2-4). Its monuments to be overturned, and its places swept away that God might come down and dwell among them.

**II. Worship localised in its position** (ver. 4, 5). God would select a spot to which Israel must resort, institute a worship which should appeal to the senses, and teach the truth that where His people meet there He dwells. (1 Kings 8, 29 ; 2 Chron. 7, 12.)

**III. Worship joyful in its nature** (ver. 7). There was enough in Israel's past and present history to make them joyful. It is God's will that we should serve Him with gladness, and never cover His altar with tears. (Mal. 2, 13.) Religion should never be a task or drudgery, but a pleasure. God commands those who worship Him to be joyful. "Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

**IV. Worship Divine in its regulations.** God only knows and prescribes what is acceptable to Him. We must not follow custom, nor devise for ourselves. In papal ceremonies and the worship of images we have ingenuity "graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17, 29)—"a show of wisdom in *will worship*" (worship arbitrarily invented, devised by self-will, not by God, and which has a reputation of wisdom.) (Col. ii. 23.)

**V. Worship obligatory in its ritual.** There was room for vows, free-will offerings and voluntary efforts ; yet the worship was binding upon all. The command was peremptory. Households and tribes must come to the appointed place (ver. 6). They must bring the kind of offerings specified, and no other. It is our duty to recognise God as our protector (ver. 10) and proprietor. Our attendance in His house should not be matter of form or custom, but of conscience.

Return, my senses, range no more abroad ;  
He only finds his bliss who seeks for God.—*Parnell*.

#### THE CHOSEN PLACE.—*Verses 4-6.*

The name of the place is not mentioned by Moses. Different places were chosen in after times, Mizpeh, Shiloh and Jerusalem. "This studied silence was maintained partly lest the Canaanites, within whose territory it lay, might have concentrated their forces to frustrate all hopes of obtaining it ; partly lest the desire of possessing a place of such importance might have become a cause of strife or rivalry amongst the Hebrew tribes, as about the appointment to the priesthood." (Num. xvi.)—*Jamieson*.

**I. An assertion of God's right to every place.** All the earth belongs to God. He has perfect right to appropriate any spot. "The Lord hath chosen Zion ; He hath desired it for His habitation." Now spiritual incense may be offered in every place. (Mal. i 11.) There has been divine order and gradual revelation in the worship of God ; "but the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." The heart, spirit and truth are required more than place. (John iv. 21-24.)

**II. A Dwelling place for God.** "To put His name there." God's name is in every place, where He specially reveals Himself (*cf.* 1 Kings viii. 29), and which is therefore His habitation or dwelling place. The God of heaven will indeed dwell with men upon earth. God is specially present in His house—a place distinguished by His presence—detached from secular pursuits, and

attended by true worshippers—the most solemn and attractive place on earth. “How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” (Gen. xxviii. 17.)

**III. An aid to unity.** To this chosen place all the tribes were to repair several times a year. The meeting would thus counteract local interests, tribal jealousies, and feuds. Like the Grecian games the festivals would cultivate national feeling and act as a bond of union. They were not merely commemorations of great events, but occasions for the reunion of friends, the enjoyments of hospitality and interchange of kindness. They opened the heart to joy and gave a welcome to the stranger and the fatherless. The Christian Church is a unity of many people, the centre of friendships and joys. “Jerusalem is builded (the well built one) as a city that is compact together (in unity), whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel (*i.e.*, a law or custom to Israel, or a testimony to Israel’s covenant).” (Ps. cxx. 3, 4.)

**IV. A preservative of purity.** “That there should be one national centre for the religion of the people was obviously essential to the great ends of the whole dispensation. Had fanciful varieties of worship such as Polytheism delighted in been tolerated, the Israelites would soon have lapsed into idolatry, and the deposit of the true faith and knowledge of God would have been, humanly speaking hopelessly lost.” (*Speak. Com.*) This holy ground, sanctified by God’s presence and consecrated to His service, demands purity of motive, heart and life. “Feigned holiness is a double evil,” says St. Jerome. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, etc.” (Ps. xxiv. 3–5.)

Look to thy actions well,

For churches either are our heaven or hell.

(Geo. Herbert.)

# THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.—Verses 5, 6.

It is advantageous individually and socially to meet together in religious worship.

**I. It is a necessity of our moral nature.** As social beings we crave for the society of our fellowmen; as religious creatures we depend upon God and seek His presence. Worship is needful to satisfy our instincts and hearts—to develop our nature and dispositions.

**II. It is a bond of Christian fellowship.** In this hallowed spot dearest friends “meet and mingle into bliss.” Here is delight with the excellent of the earth, sympathy and sweet converse with God and His people. Public prayer and praise have a sensible tendency to unite men together and to cherish and enlarge their generous affections.

**III. It is an advantage to the nation.** The national assembly to Israel was an immense advantage. But for public worship the greater part of mankind would have no instruction—no religion at all. This diffuses knowledge among the people, unites different classes of society and preserves real godliness in the nation.

**IV. It is a duty of Divine appointment.** “Thither shalt thou come, bring burnt offerings and eat” The apostle reproved those who deserted public worship. “Not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together, as the manner of



some is." (Heb. x. 25.) We are not to forget the command of God, nor dispute the practice of apostolic churches and Christian communities in every age. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God."

THE FUTURE INHERITANCE.—*Verses 9, 10.*

Canaan is here described in a way adapted to the condition of Israel and may typify the future portion of the believer.

**I. The description given.** 1. *A rest*; "the rest." "This is the scene of combat, not of rest." At the end of the journey, will be peace, "quietness and assurance for ever." "My chief conception of heaven is perfect rest," said Robert Hall. 2. *An inheritance* not gained by hereditary succession, merit, or human friendship; but prepared for "the saints in light"—an inheritance "incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away." 3. *A gift*. "The Lord your God giveth you"—a pure, munificent, and unparalled gift in Christ Jesus. Denoting great love, freeness and blessing. 4. *A dwelling*. "So that ye dwell in safety." Beautiful in situation, secure in possessions, "it stands securely high, indissolubly sure." The metropolis of the universe, the abode of saints, the palace of angels, and the residence of the Great King.

O ye blest scenes of permanent delight!  
Full without measure! Lasting beyond bound!  
A perpetuity of bliss, is bliss.  
Could you, so rich in rapture, fear an end,  
That ghastly thought would drink up all your joy,  
And quite imparadise the realms of light.

**II. The relation to this inheritance indicated.** "Ye are not as yet come to the rest." God's people are seeking it and will attain it. Many come near but do not enter it. Hence all should take warning, be encouraged, and strive to enter it. "It is the best of all blessings," said David Stoner, "to die well, and get safely home to heaven." "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest."

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. 1. *The duty*. "Observe to do." Weighty and most important. 2. *Method of performing it*. (a) Considerately "observe." (b) Continually "all the days ye live upon earth." "A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipresent like the Deity."—*J. Webster*.

The path of duty is the way to glory.  
*Tennyson.*

Vers. 2, 3. *Destruction of idolatry*. A divine command. A prudent policy. A good example. "We easily fall into idolatry; for we are inclined thereunto by nature, and coming to us by inheritance, it seems pleasant."—*Luther*.

Ver. 5. 1. *The place*. The heathen

sought and worshipped gods of nature wherever they could discern any trace of Divinity. 2. *The name*. The name indicates the manifestation of his presence in the place; "presents his personality, as comprehended in the word *Jehovah*, in a visible sign, the tangible sign of his essential presence." (*Keil*.) 3. *The seeking*. Not merely turn in a certain direction; but to inquire for something. Hence come to God's house for a purpose, in anxiety to fulfil that purpose. Not to seek entertainment, for it is not a place of amusement (Ezek. xxxiii. 22); nor to attend with worldlimindedness; for it is not the house of merchandise (Luke xix. 45, 46). We must not profane it by sinful indulgence and Satan's service (Jas. i. 21). Attend with serious

consideration, constant watchfulness and deep concern to obtain God's blessing.

Vers. 7, 12. *Joyful Worship.* This joy springs—1. *From* Divine goodness, past and present. 2. Great numbers, households and tribes. 3. Reciprocal feeling, warm hearts will create joy in prayer and praise and vibrate like chords in harmony. There is a place for song as well as meditation in the sanctuary. "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God."

Ver. 9. *Not come to the rest.* No more are any of us indeed, till we come to that "rest which remaineth for the people of God." (Heb. iv. 3, 8-10). The ark was transportive till settled in Solomon's temple; so till we come to heaven are we in continual unrest.—(*Trapp*). Learn: 1. The insufficiency of earthly bliss; both to the believer and unbeliever. 2. The nature of heavenly bliss. Complete, perpetual and certain. Causes of evil and distress removed, and communications of glory beyond description.

### THE SACREDNESS OF BLOOD.—*Verses 16, 20-23.*

The prohibition to use blood is most distinct and often repeated, and that for many reasons.

**I. Blood sacred as an article of food.** In Pagan and uncivilised nations it was the custom to eat flesh whilst quivering with life and to drink blood mixed with wine, as a right of idolatrous worship. (*cf.* 1 Sam. xiv. 32; Ezek. xxxiii. 25; Acts 15.) But when animal food was granted to man it was forbidden "to eat flesh with its soul, its blood." (Gen. ix. 4.) The body may become food, but the blood, the life of the body which is the gift of God must be treated with reverence and reserved for Him.

**II. Blood sacred as an emblem of life.** Blood is the seat, the source of life. It contains the vital principle of all animal life, "For it is the life of all flesh," (ver. 14). "Man is man only by virtue of his blood, and nature is chiefly admirable as supplying its ingredients."—(*Grindon*.) Blood is distinguished from all other constituents of the human body. "It is the fountain of life, the first to live and last to die, and the primary seat of the animal soul; it lives and is nourished of itself, and by no other part of the human body."—(*Harvey*.) When the blood is shed the life is gone. Hence, man or beast guilty of this act must be put to death." "Blood of your lives will I require." (Gen. ix. 5; Ex. xxi. 12-28.)

Murder may pass unpunish'd for a time,  
But tardy justice will o'ertake the crime.—*Dryden*.

**III. Blood sacred as an element of expiation.** As the blood was identical with the life and represented the soul of the victim, God appointed it as a substitute for the sinner's life. Thus the life of the sacrifice was an atonement for the life of the offerer. It was an established rabbinical maxim that "there is no expiation except by blood," a principle recognised in Heb. ix. 22 "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Let us be thankful that Christ died, and shed His precious blood for us—blood which cleanseth from all sin and "which speaketh better things than that of Abel." Never count the blood of the covenant, by which we are sanctified and saved "an unholy (or common) thing" (Heb. x. 29) and thus insult God and lose your soul!

### DIRECTIONS IN THE CHOICE OF ANIMAL FOOD.—*Verses 15, 16-20-26.*

The instructions concerning food were given to the Israelites in a way most convenient and generally understood at the time. God separated His people

from others and all their laws reminded them of His covenant. Even laws of diet and regulations in the choice of food were given to teach dependence and enforce obedience.

**I. Food in its benevolent design.** Life requires for its maintenance constant supplies of food. Creatures may fast long, but can never dispense with food altogether. We may therefore learn the goodness of God in caring for the body, in providing sufficient and wholesome food, and in the enjoyment and strength which it gives. Since food is necessary we are taught to labour and pray for its continuance. "Give us this day our daily bread." In legislating for our lower nature God teaches what is wholesome and unwholesome—suggests His greater care for our higher wants, food for mind, heart and soul, and reminds us of the care which should exercise over body and soul.

**II. Food in its ceremonial use.** In the garden of Eden vegetables were given to man (Gen. i. 29). Animal food was granted first to Noah (Gen. ix. 25). In patriarchal times food consisted of flesh of animals tame and wild, as well as cereals. In the wilderness supplies came from heaven. In the promised land special rules were given as to kind of animals to be used. (Lev. xi., Deut. xiv.) The Israelites were not to eat animals which were unclean, which were offered to idols (Ex. xxxiv. 15); and which had been torn by wild beasts (Lev. xxii. 8, cf. Ezek. iv. 14). All animals for food had formerly to be killed at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. xvi. 1-8), but in view of entrance into the land the prohibition is relaxed. More liberty was given, but the blood of the animal was prohibited to prevent ferocity in men towards lower creatures and profanation of a sacred element. The separation of animals into clean and unclean would remind Israel of their separation from the nations. They were not to join in convivial feasts and social banquets of idolaters. Their ordinary meals must be chosen with care and eaten in gratitude. We must be temperate, orderly and obedient in the government of the table, and exercise control over appetites and desires. Touch nothing unclean, regard the sanctity of life and let thanksgiving be offered with daily food. (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.) "Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16. *The prohibition of blood.* To elucidate this ordinance, I shall—  
I. Confirm the fact here stated. God had from the beginning appointed the blood of animals to be offered by man as an atonement for his soul. This appears throughout all the Mosaic history and the New Testament.  
II. Consider the prohibition as founded on it. It was most salutary as tending—  
1. To excite reverence for sacrifices.  
2. To bring continually to remembrance the way of salvation.  
3. To direct attention to the great sacrifice.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

upon God's will. 2. Related to the health of the people. Most of animals forbidden are unclean and unwholesome—others injurious in warm countries. To please the appetite is often prejudicial to health. 3. Designed to promote religious sanctity. We must be separate from all uncleanness; in religious worship and in the common acts of life. "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you."

Here's neither want of appetite no mouths;  
Pray heaven we be not scant of meat or  
mirth.—*Shakespeare.*

Vers. 20-26. *Law of diet.* 1. Founded



THE LEVITE.—*Verse 19.*

This frequently recurring description of the Levites (*cf.* ver. 18, chap. xiv. 27; xvi. 11, 14; xviii. 6; xxvi. 12), does not assume that they were homeless, which would be at variance with the allotment of towns for them to dwell in (Num. xxxv.); but simply implies what is frequently added in explanation "that the Levites had no part nor inheritance," no share of the land as their hereditary property, and in this respect resembled strangers (chap. xiv. 21, 29; xvi. 11). And the repeated injunction to invite the Levites to the sacrificial meals is not at variance with Num. xviii. 21, where the tithes are assigned to the tribe of Levi for their maintenance. For, however ample this revenue may have been according to the law, it was so entirely dependent upon the honesty and conscientiousness of the people that the Levites might very easily be brought into a straitened condition, if indifference toward the Lord and his servants should prevail throughout the nation.—*Keil.*

**I. The Levites, servants of the people.** They were appointed to teach and officiate for Israel before God and thus prevent the anger of God from coming upon the people (*cf.* Num. viii. 18–22.) They were given to the people and depended upon their help and generosity, designed to train them for service and not absolve them from duty. In heathen countries the priestly caste was hereditary, wealthy, and held much of the land (*cf.* Gen. xlvii. 2), but the Levites had no landed property, were servants of God and the people. "Behold I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; to you they are given as a gift for the Lord, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Num. xvii. 6).

**II. The Levites, servants of God.** God claimed them as the first-born, separated and cleansed them. They were dedicated to him as Israel's representatives in holy work. They had no worldly portion in houses and land. The avenues to wealth and power were closed to them. God alone was their inheritance in the riches of His grace and the resources of His providence.

WARNING AGAINST SNARES.—*Verses 29–32.*

During the sojourn in Egypt Israel became familiar with the customs of idolatry. From this idolatry they were scarcely weaned. Since the forms of licentiousness were worse in the land which they were to inherit, there was need of caution. "Forewarned, forearmed."

**I. The need of warning.** In circumstances most favourable and secure there is need of watchfulness and prayer. 1. *The dangers were great.* "Take heed"—Evils might be vivid, abominable, and cruel, but familiarity would weaken resistance and ensnare. The vices of a companion and of society may be gross and palpable to others, yet (says Shakspeare) "a friendly eye cannot see such faults." 2. *The attractions were strong.* Idol worship was ancient and prevalent. Fashions are often popular and attractive. "Do at Rome what Rome does" is the rule of many. But conscience must be regarded, and the command of God obeyed. 3. *The foe was conquered, not subdued.* Sins may revive, and habits not broken may regain their dominion and tyranny. Men may cease to swear and forsake intemperate ways, and yet be afterwards ensnared. Pity for the enemy, and dependence upon resolves, must not throw us off our guard.

**II. The consequences of neglecting the warning.** There must be no curiosity, no parley, but constant regard to the word of God. 1. *Neglect would offend*

*God.* Idolatry was hateful to God, and if guilty we lose His favour and protection. We must hate what He hates, and assimilate our tastes and habits to His. We shall never err, if we "observe to do" His commandments. 2. *Neglect would bring ruin upon themselves.* Idolatry had been the overthrow of Pharaoh, and the destruction of surrounding nations. It will bring utter ruin to individuals and nations who persist in it. Israel sadly fell by neglecting this caution. (Jer. xxxii. 35; Ezek. xxiii. 37.) "They followed vanity and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them." (2 Kings xvii. 15.)

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 25. *Not eat.* Who can ever think any commandment of God to be light or little, when this of not eating the blood is charged with so much strictness? The *minutula* of the law, as well as the *magnalia*, must be carefully heeded and practised. — *Trapp.*

Ver. 29. *Cut off nations.* God in the history of nations. 1. Appointing their lot. (Josh. xxiii. 4). 2. Robbed of their inheritance. "God shall cut off the nations." 3. Succeeding to their possessions. "Thou succeedest them." 4. Secure in their dwelling "and dwellest in the land." "The life of a nation," says Dr. Arnold, "is to me as distinct as that of an individual." "The Lord is governor among the nations." (Ps. xxii. 28; 1 Chron. xvi. 31.)

Ver. 31. Idolatry. 1. Abominable to God. 2. Cruel to humanity. 3. Easily fallen into. "We are inclined thereunto by nature, and

coming to us by inheritance, it seems pleasant."—*Luther.*

Ver. 31. 1. The command a rule of duty. "Observe to do it." 2. A complete rule of duty. "Thou shalt not add, nor diminish." *Add* by pretending to have received similar divine revelations and persuading men to believe them, as Mahomet and others; *diminish*, by taking from them, denying them to be from God, and acting contrary to them." From these words it is evident that the Jews were not to add any other rites of worship of their own devising, or from the idolatrous customs of those countries, nor omit any of those which God had commanded them to use. For if they had used any of the Gentile ceremonies, whereby they honoured their gods, it would easily have introduced the worship of the gods themselves; and if they had omitted any of the rites which God had ordained, some other would have easily stepped into their room which were used by idolators."—*Wilson.*

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XII.

Vers. 1-4. *Destroy.* This is a very important law: in this world, unhappily, names are often things; for whenever a party wish to get power, a party holding erroneous doctrines, the first thing they do is to establish titles; and when they have got titles, they soon follow them up by asserting realities. And therefore it is very wisely provided here that not only should the scenes, the altars, and the

groves, all be overturned, as having been desecrated by practices that were abominable in the sight of a holy God, but that even the very names that might remind of that superstition that had passed away should be expunged from their vocabularies, and not mentioned even in their conversation.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Vers. 5-7. *Place.* When we re-  
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member what the policy and practice of all the kings of Israel was, viz., to draw off their subjects from the place where God set His name and to deter them from going to Judah and Jerusalem, by means of the calves of Bethel and of Dan . . . it is not possible that Deuteronomy, requiring every Israelite to bring his sacrifice to the place which the Lord should choose to set His name there, should ever have been accepted as genuine and inspired if its genuineness and inspiration had not been incontrovertible (*Bp. Wordsworth*). It is a wise, a salutary, and a laudable provision of the Church's discipline, that she sets apart, and consecrates, by solemn religious rites to God's glory, the places which she intends for His worship; and by outward signs of decency, and reverence of majesty and holiness, impresses them with an appropriate character which, whilst it redounds to the honour of God, operates also with no mean or trivial influence on the minds of His people. A certain sense of holy pleasure is diffused over the pious and meditative mind, as soon as the feet cross the threshold which separates the house of God from common places. We feel that we are on "holy ground;" and a still small voice within, as we draw near to "worship God in the beauty of holiness," "it is good for us to be here."—*Bp. Mant*.

Vers. 17, 18; 20–26. *Eat*. Some people have a foolish way of not minding or pretending not to mind what they eat. For my part, I mind very studiously; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind this, will hardly mind anything else. (*Dr. Johnson*.) Moderation is absolutely required in the lower things of life, especially in that of eating. Health—one of the greatest blessings of life—depends upon it; so also the happy flow of spirits, without which life is at least a perfect blank.—*E. Davies*.

#### Ver. 26. *Vows*.

Unheeded vows may heedfully be broken;  
And he wants wit, that wants resolved will,  
To learn his wit to exchange the bad for  
better.—*Shakespeare*.

Vers. 30–32. *Take heed*. There is a story which tells of a bell suspended on a rock dangerous to navigation. The waves of the ocean beating upon it caused it to make a noise to keep off the approaching mariner. It is said that at one time some pirates destroyed the bell to prevent the warning. Not long after, these very pirates struck upon the rock and were lost. How many hush the voice of warning at the point of danger, and founder upon the rock of temptation and are lost for ever.—*McCosh*.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—The true modes and forms of worship have been laid down, the next step is to legislate against the authors and abettors of false ones. Such tempters are not to be spared, even though (vers. 1–5) their teaching be confirmed by miracles; or (vers. 6–12) be nearly allied by kindred or friendship; or (vers. 12–19) be supported in their apostacy by a whole city.—*Speak. Com*.

1. **Prophet**. Received communications orally or by vision. **Dreamer**. Through medium of dreams. These, the two chief media of divine revelation. (*cf.* Num. xii. 6.) **Signs and wonders**. To accredit his mission, and apparently true, yet not wrought by God, but by the power of the wicked one to deceive. (2 Thess. ii. 9.)

2. Go after other gods and forsake Jehovah; therefore the prophet, a false prophet, a seducer and impostor, and must be put to death.

3. **Know**, prove, or test the people in loyalty. (*cf.* viii. 2; Gen. xxii. 1.)



4, 5. Israel must cleave firmly to God. There must be regular judicial procedure against the impostor. The people, the whole community must take part in the stoning to show their horror at the crime, and clear themselves of complicity in it. God only must be the object of regard and they must not be thrust, forced from the way in which they have to walk. Thus put away evil, an exhortation often given as an affair of importance. (*cf.* chaps. xvii. 7; xix. 19; xxi. 21; xxii. 22, 24.)

6. A second temptation to idolatry might be from blood-relations and intimate friends. Brother, fraternal tie. Wife, object of dearest affection. Friend, loved as much as our own life. (1 Sam. xviii. 1, 3.)

7, 8. The gods to be worshipped might be near or far off; might be different to the idols of Canaan, "or commend themselves by the charm of peculiarity and novelty." There must be no yielding, nor must the tempters escape. The accumulation of synonyms (*pity, spare, conceal*) serves to make the passage more emphatic. Israel was to put to death without pity and stone the offender. (Lev. xx. 2.)

12-18. A third case when one city *hears* of another city which has been led astray. Worthless, profligate men may rise up. (v. 13.) Children of Belial. Wicked, designing and lawless men (Jud. xix. 22; 1 Sam. i. 16; xxv. 26). (*Sept.* perverse men.)

13. Withdrawn. Verses 5 and 10, indicating strong persuasion, a degree of force, not easy seduction.

14. Thou. The magistrate to whom it officially belonged to investigate. If the report was true, the inhabitants were beyond protection and smitten. Man and beast were put to death without reserve, and all booty heaped together and burned with the city.

16. For the Lord. "As a whole offering to the Lord thy God;" sanctified to him by destruction. (Lev. vi. 15, 16.)

17. Nothing must cleave to Israel, no spoil must be taken that the Lord may turn from His anger.

### ENTICEMENTS OF FALSE PROPHETS.—Verses 1-5.

Former perils might spring from Canaanites, now they may arise among themselves. Hence they must take care not to be drawn away if any should tempt them. "If there arise," etc.

1. The Purpose of their Enticements. "Let us go after other gods," to revolt from Jehovah, which is treason—a crime against the law and authority of God, against the organisation and life of society. Strange that any should be guilty in Israel, or in the present day, of such wickedness! But many, professedly learned and religious, entice from God and give divine honours to saints and images. 1. *From God whose authority is supreme and should be revered.* "The Lord your God." Doctrines, revelations, and miracles which pretend to be of God and are not so, vie with his law and authority; usurp his throne and claim absolute supremacy. 2. *From God whose past favours should bind to him.* "Which brought you out of the land of Egypt," etc. (ver. 5). One thing was certain, repeated to Israel a thousand times and written as with a sunbeam in their history—that God was supreme. God, and God alone, had redeemed them from bondage and oppression. God's constant goodness should touch our sensibility, excite our gratitude, and lead us to most joyful obedience.

II. The credentials by which they entice. The kingdom of lies has its wonders as well as the kingdom of truth, and prophets of God have their imitators. In our time we have dreamers of dreams, seers and pretenders to inspiration. "Imitators are a servile race," says Fontaine. 1. *They dream dreams.* Pretend to have revelations from God in visions of the night. Jews had great regard for dreams, observed them, and often consulted those who

pretended to explain them. This custom was forbidden. We must look only to God and His servants. 2. *They perform wonders.* The prophet gives "a sign," a prediction of some future event; performs "a wonder" or feat of power—some counterfeit appearance of the supernatural produced by human artifice or Satanic agency. 3. *Their signs and wonders come to pass.* Predictions and miracles are authenticated by apparent facts. But miracles alone do not prove the truth of the doctrine and the divine mission of the performer. The doctrine must commend itself to conscience before it can be sealed by miracle. There are those "whose coming (presence) is after the working of Satan with (three means) all power and signs and lying wonders" (*lit.* of falsehood) to attest false doctrine and lead astray. (2 Thess. ii. 9.)

**III. The treatment to be shown to these false prophets.** In this matter there is no uncertainty, and there must be no hesitation. 1. *They must be rejected.* "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet." God's law is the standard of truth, all that contradicts this is false. No sign nor wonder must lead us to believe in one whose purpose falsifies his profession. The God of truth can never lie. "I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart (a wilful fraud). (Jer. xiv. 13, 14). 2. *They must be punished.* "That prophet, or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death" (ver. 5). The risks and guilt must be removed by putting away the guilty one; spare him, the infection will spread and you are responsible. "Thus must the mischief be put away." We are not to persecute and put to death. But we must denounce error, guard against seducers, and brand with infamy all attempts to "go after other gods." "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." (2 John 9, 11).

#### FALSE PROPHETS.—Verses 1-5.

"The standing rule of faith and practice had been given once for all. That the people were to hold fast. The prophet who propounded another rule could only be an imposter. We need not then suppose that Moses is putting an impossible case by way of enforcing his words, as St. Paul does (Gal. i. 6); nor yet that the prophet in question is one who was originally a true prophet, and obtained authority by his miracles as such, but was afterwards drawn away into apostasy." (*Speak. Com.*) The prophet, by his teaching, plainly contradicts the accredited standard of truth, advocates idolatry, and therefore he is a false prophet.

**I. False prophets are permitted to rise up among the people.** They appeared in Israel, in the days of Christ and in apostolic times. It is predicted they will come "in the last days." (Mt. xxiv. 11; 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 1.) God's people are often sorely tried, and the Christian Church sifted. Heresies, prodigies and controversies shake the faith, and "false prophets" work "great signs and wonders" to "deceive the very elect," if it were possible. (Mt. xxiv. 24).

**II. The people are often ready to obey false prophets when they appear.** The moral condition of the people and the facts of history prove this. We have a love for the wonderful, a craving for novelty. We are ignorant of God, and our hearts tend towards idolatry. The teaching of seducers is bewitching; we listen, believe and are drawn astray. (Gal. iii. 1). "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God."

**III. The consequences of this obedience will be serious.** Serious to the teacher, the taught, and the community at large. 1. *Apostasy from God.* God was the Sovereign and Supreme Ruler in Israel. Idolatry was not simply a spiritual offence, but direct rebellion against their king. It was a political, a national offence; high treason itself, punishable by the law. 2. *Utter ruin.* The offender was stoned to death, and perished not alone in his iniquity. Apostasy will destroy character and life. Theudas was slain, and as many as believed him scattered. Judas of Galilee drew many after him, but perished, and his followers were disappointed. (Acts v. 36, 37). Watch and pray, and let none "thrust thee out of the way."

WALKING AFTER THE LORD.—*Verse 4.*

"Walk after the Lord your God." 1. In reverent imitation. His example is before you—follow it. 2. With affectionate fear. You must not be familiar with God; He is your Lord and Maker. 3. With all obedience. Show your love for him by obeying his commands. 4. With holy zeal. Suffer no profaning of His name, no desecration of His temple. (*Bib. Museum*).

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

In this chapter we have *three enticements* from God. False teachers (verses 1-5); intimate friends (verses 6-12; wicked cities (verses 12-17).

Ver. 2. *After other gods.* Awful guilt in the Israelite. Strong delusion and infinite risk in our day. *Let us go.* 1. A dangerous pursuit. 2. In search of an unknown object. "Gods which thou hast not known." 3. Hence folly to enter the path. Forsaking God, who is known to be good and holy.

Deceit is the false road to happiness; and all the joys we travel to through vice, like fairy banquets, vanish when we touch them.—*A. Hill.*

Ver. 4. *Distinguishing marks of godliness.* Walk, fear, keep, obey, serve and cleave. *Walk after God.*

1. God the great end of life. 2. Keeping this end in view will save from manifold temptations. 3. The method of pursuing active, affectionate and constant obedience. One or two good actions, a step or two, will not make a walker. There must be continued motion, unwearied and steady as the stars in their orbits. "Enoch walked (habitually and closely) with God." (Gen. v. 24). *Walk with the Lord.* 1. Not *before* Him in desire, plans and anticipations. "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." 2. Not *behind* Him in fear, hesitation or reluctance. 3. But *with* Him in confidence, affection and joy. Like a child walking hand in hand with its father.

"Mutual love, the crown of all our bliss."

—*Milton.*

THE SEDUCTIVE POWER OF AFFECTION.—*Verses 6-11.*

The next danger springs from the influence of affection. If miracle if supernatural fail, those near and dear may seduce. But even they, if found guilty after fair and formal trial, must be put to death.

**I. Seduction may come from intimate friends.** A *brother*, who should be a helper; a *daughter*, who should be dutiful; a *wife*, like Job's (2, 9) may



entice. An intimate and familiar *friend*, whom we love as ourselves, in whom we confide our secrets, may secretly plot to draw away from God. Strongest temptations are often from nearest friends.

**II. Friends who thus seduce are guilty of the greatest crime.** "They are not friends, but foes in a man's own household." A friend consults our welfare; but these secretly plot against character, reputation, and position. Their design is disgraceful, and no affection, no degree of kindred must screen their crime nor conceal their persons. "I was wounded in the house of my friends."

**III. The claims of God are superior to Human Affection.** We must be kindly affectionate one to another; but we must prefer God to our best friends. "Thou shalt not consent unto him" (ver. 8). When two claims come into collision, the weaker must give way. Though we must not cease to love, yet we must act as if we hated (Luke xiv. 26, 27); we must disobey, and, if need be, desert those to whom we are naturally bound, and follow our higher calling. God must have and deserves the whole, and not halves. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mat. x. 37).

#### GUILT AND DANGER IN DEPARTING FROM GOD.—*Verses 8-11.*

Consider this ordinance as—

**I. A temporary enactment.** With the cessation of the theocracy it has ceased. Though, at first sight, it may seem severe, yet it was—1. Just, as it respected the individual; for he was guilty of most heinous, most ruinous offence. 2. Merciful, with regard to the public. Most solemn were the issues to the Jews and to mankind, which depended on national fidelity. Hence the punishment was stern, severe, and monitory.

**II. A lasting admonition.** It declares to us in the strongest terms:—1. The evil of departing from God, by whom they had been delivered from bondage and guided in their journey. 2. The danger of being accessory to any one's departure from Him. "Neither be partaker of other men's sins" (1 Tim. v. 22; 2 John 11. 3. The need we have of firmness and steadfastness in religion. "If sinners entice thee consent thou not."—*C. Simeon.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 6. 1. *The nature of friendship.* "Thy friend as thine own soul." A friend is a second self. Numerous are examples. David and Jonathan in Scripture, Achilles and Patroclus in Homer, Nisus and Euryalus in Virgil, and the well known story of Damon and Pythias. 2. *The abuse of friendship.* In betraying secrets, enticing to evil. "Try your friend before you choose him." All who assume the name are not entitled to the confidence of a friend. "As to myself," said

Napoleon, "I know well that I have not one true friend. As long as I continue what I am, I may have as many pretended friends as I please."

Vers. 6-8. I. *The inducements of the tempter.* 1. From those least suspected—sister, brother, parent, or friend. 2. In secret. "Entice thee secretly." Wickedness dreads light and seeks to conceal itself. 3. Plausible. This religion is popular "the gods of the people," and yours is singular and

confined to one God. "Let us go."  
**II. The spirit in which they must be met.** 1. With firmness. No, we will not go. 2. With a sense of the danger incurred. In forsaking God he forsook the way of our fathers, and the way in

which we have been trained. We degenerate in our character and rush into danger. "He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed."

THE SEDUCTIVE POWER OF NUMBERS.—*Verses 12-18.*

The third instance of enticement is that of a whole city in revolt. If the city was found guilty after inquiry, then all its inhabitants were to be put to death, and it was to be reduced to a heap to avert the anger of God.

**I. Multitudes may be disposed to evil.** In the Church, in a community, in a city, a few may affect many. "Children of Belial," throw off all restraints of conscience and law, and cry out "let us go and serve other gods." Many walk in the broad path to destruction, but in the narrow, only here and there a traveller is found.

**II. Multitudes disposed to evil are not to lead us astray.** "Thou shalt thou inquire and make search." We are not to be unduly influenced by numbers. Majorities are not always right. Truth may be ridiculed and its adherents in the minority. Luther was told by a monk to whom he was attached, "the whole world is against you: how can you persist in the course you have chosen?" The noble reply was—"if the whole world be against Luther, then Luther will be against the whole world." We must rest upon the rock and hold to the revealed Word. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

**III. Vigorous means are to be used to destroy the evil.** Cattle and citizens were to be "utterly" destroyed, and all the spoil burned in the streets. We are not authorised to destroy by fire and sword. But by spiritual agencies we must purify the Church, educate the country, and destroy the evils which curse society. We must watch public sentiment, refute error, and preach "the truth as if in Jesus" to save men from apostasy and death.

HABITATIONS DIVINELY FIXED.—*Verse 12.*

The clause "which the Lord thy God hath given thee to dwell in," significantly reminds them that the real ownership of their dwellings rested in the Lord (*cf.* Lev. xxv. 23), and that they, the mere tenants, must not allow His property to become a centre of rebellion against His just authority.—*Speak. Com.*

**I. Residence in a city, the gift of God.** All the earth is God's. In town or country there is a providence over men; a permission to fix their abode. Momentous junctures in life are often fore-appointments of an unrecognised Protector, who settles the limits of nations, locates the residence of men, "and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations."

**II. Residence in a city disturbed by wicked men.** There may be splendid buildings, noble institutions and great advantages in cities. But often dangers and temptations outweigh privileges. Sons of Belial corrupt the population and

draw from allegiance to God. Lot thought Sodom was a desirable residence, but "he was vexed with the filthy conversation (*wanton behaviour*, licentious life) of the wicked (*the lawless*)."  
(2 Pet. i. 7).

III. Residence terminated by the destruction of a city. We are only tenants at will. Pestilence and fire may drive away. The abominations of the inhabitants may bring down the judgments of God. No place is secure, no abode is permanent below. Seek, therefore, "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 12-18. *Rumours and the reputation of the Church.* I. The case supposed—a flying rumour; city talk, etc. II. The duty enjoined. 1. Not to be slighted or hushed up. 2. Not to be rashly acted upon. 3. To be carefully sifted. 4. If found to be true, to be followed by prompt and decisive action. Learn—To be jealous of reports touching the integrity of God's people, or the institutions of religion.—*Bib. Museum.*

Vers. 12-15. *The duty of magistrates.* 1. Not to judge before they know. Many act against knowledge, but none can act rightly without it. We can neither teach nor give judgment concerning that which we know not. 2. To inquire that they may know. "Here are three words—First, they must inquire; and if upon inquiry they got not information, then they were to *make search*; and if upon search they did not find, then they were to *ask diligently*; that is, to renew the inquiry, that by interrogating all persons who possibly know anything of the cause, they might search out the cause which they knew not." (*Caryl*). "I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out." 3. To punish justly when they discover the guilty. They should have respect for law, and care

for those under law. Equal and impartial justice must be done to all. "Justice proportions the smartness to the fault; so that we may behold the greatness of the offence in the fitness of the punishment."—*W. Secker.*

Ver. 16. *The memorial heap.* "An heap for ever." 1. A monument of Divine justice against sin. 2. A beacon warning to all posterity. "This day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein, because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger. (Jer. xlv. 2, 3.)

*A city sacrificed for the nation*, or the good of many demanding the sacrifice of a few. A principle of Divine procedure, common in operation, strange in nature, benevolent in design, and worthy of devout regard.

Ver. 17, 18. *Two courses of conduct.* 1. Apostacy exposing multitudes to danger and death. 2. Obedience and its benefits. (a) In warding off Divine anger. (b) Securing Divine mercy. (c) Causing increase of posterity. "Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord thy God."

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIII.

Vers. 1-5. *Go after.* The question is not whether a doctrine is beautiful, but whether it is true. When we want to go to a place, we don't ask whether

the road leads through a pretty country, but whether it is the right road, the road pointed out by authority, the turnpike road.—*Hare.*



Vers. 6, 7. *Thy brother.* None of the affections have been noted to fascinate and bewitch, but love and envy.—*Bacon.*

Ver. 6. *Thy friend as thine own soul.*

"Friendship is the cement of two minds, As of one man the soul and body is, Of which one cannot sever but the other Suffers a needful separation.—*Chapman.*

Ver. 8. *Consent not.* He that yields to temptation, debases himself with a debasement from which he can never arise.—*Mann.*

"They that fear the adder's sting will not come near his hissing."—*Chapman.*

Vers. 12 and 18. *One of thy cities.* To a single teacher the hope of an entire city is often entrusted.—*Scriver.*

Ver. 14. *Enquire.* I reverence

numbers; but only when they produce proof, not when they shun enquiry.—*St. Athanasius.*

Ver. 17. *His anger.* The wrath of man is the rage of man; but the wrath of God is the reason of God.—*Bp. Reynolds.*

Ver. 18. *Hearken to the Lord.* We remember the anecdote of the Roman commander who forbade an engagement with the enemy, and the first transgressor against whose prohibition was his son. He accepted the challenge of the leader of the other host, met, slew, spoiled him, and then in triumphant feeling carried the spoils to his father's tent. But the Roman refused to recognise the instinct which prompted this as deserving of the name of love. Disobedience contradicted it and deserved death.—*F. W. Robertson.*

## CHAPTER XIV.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The people were not only to suppress idolatry, but their whole life and conduct must be ruled according to their holy character and high calling. They must not, like other nations, disfigure their bodies in passionate grief, nor defile themselves with unclean meat.

1. **Cut.** (Lev. xix. 28) as idolaters in mourning. (1 Kings xviii. 28; Jer. xvi. 6, xli. 5; Ezek. vii. 18. **Baldness.** A space between the eyebrows left bare in honour of the dead. (Lev. xxi. 5.)

2. **Holy.** A super-added motive to induce obedience and "an emphatic elucidation of the first clause of ver. 1."—*Dcl.*

3-20. **Clean and unclean animals.** (*cf.* Leviticus xi.) Nothing abominable or unclean to be eaten.

4. **Beasts.** These, whose flesh would be excellent, mentioned here; because the Israelites were about to be settled in the land of promise, on the mountain pastures of which a portion of the tribes were already established, and where these animals abounded. (*Jamieson.*) **Hart**, the Syrian deer (*cf.* xii. 15.) **Roebuck**, the gazelle. **Fyrgarg**, or bison, a species of antelope, common in tracts which had been frequented by the Israelites. **Wild Ox**, translated "wild bull." (Is. li. 20.) Must be distinguished from the *re'em* of Num. xiii. 22. **Chamois**, *lxx.*, the camel-leopard, *i.e.*, the giraffe. All the creatures here given are classed by *Bochart*, among the goat and deer kind.

6. **Hoof.** Those only to be eaten which completely divide the hoof and chew the cud. The exceptions are given here and in Lev. x. 4-7.

9, 10. **Fish.** The rule is simple and comprehensive. Any fish from salt or fresh water might be eaten. But shell-fish of all kinds, whether mollusks or crustaceans, and cetaceous animals, were prohibited as well as fish which appears to have no scales, like the eel.—*Speak. Com.*

20. **Birds.** The same as those in Lev. xi. 13, *sqq.*

13. **The Glede** is added. These are chiefly birds of prey; unclean feeders; needful as scavengers, but not good for food.

21. **Dieth of itself.** The arrangement is peculiar to the repetition of law in Deut. (Lev. xvii. 15; xxii. 8. **Stranger.** A heathen traveller or sojourner; for a proselyte was subject to the law as well as a Jew. **Seethe**, a third repetition, a prohibition against a Pagan ceremony. (Ex. xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 26.)

22, 23. **Tithe.** The dedication of a tenth part of the year's produce in everything was a duty; to be brought to the sanctuary. The tithes and firstlings named here, to introduce certain directions concerning sacred meals celebrated out of them.

24-29. **Too Long.** An agreement anticipating settlement in Canaan. Distances made it difficult to carry produce to the sanctuary. It might be commuted or sold for money's worth and the proceeds go towards a social feast. Whatsoever thy soul *lusteth after*, not in a bad sense, but simply preference or liking. **Levite.** (chap. xii. 19.) Every third year the whole tithe of the year's produce was set apart, not eaten before the Lord in the sanctuary, as a portion for the Levite, widow and stranger in different towns. This was not a third or additional tithe, but the former, differently applied. The first and second year's tithe, was eaten in the sanctuary; the tithe of the third year was for the poor and needy at home. **Bless thee.** As an encouragement to carry out these instructions, God's blessing is said to follow (chap. xv. 10.)

### CONFORMITY TO WORDLY CUSTOMS.—*Verses 1-3.*

As the chosen of God, Israel must not only put away idolatry, but abstain from heathen superstitions and practices. They were endowed with nobler life, called to a special position, and must not conform to the customs of nations by whom they were surrounded.

**I. Conformity is inconsistent with a Christian's position.** He is called out of the world, separated from it in habits, character and aim: he must not go back to his old course of life. Christians are "a peculiar people," precious to God and to the world; they must not lose their value and spiritual distinction. They should live near to God and not descend to base and worldly positions. Exalted above others they must keep their dignity, never dishonour their God, nor forget His claims. "I have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine. (Lev. xx. 26).

**II. Conformity is derogatory to a Christian's character.** They are "*children of the Lord*," and should not be slaves to fashion and habit. As sons of God they must walk in love and free from idols. Walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith they are called. (Ep. iv. 1). They are holy, "*a holy people unto the Lord*," and must keep themselves unspotted from the world. (Jas. i. 27). Character, righteous character should be the impress of God's people. To be like God should be their desire and aim. "He that avoids iniquity is the best Christian," says Calamy. There must not be a mere outward nonconformity but inward spiritual transformation which makes life new and holy—new in motive, source and end. "Be not *conformed* (fashioned) to this world; be ye *transformed* (transfigured, Mt. xvii. 2; changed, 2 Cor. iii. 18) by the renewing of your mind." (Rom. xii. 2).

**III. Conformity is opposed to Divine purpose in a Christian's life.** "Chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations." Here we have Divine proprietorship and wonderful exaltation. To be filled with the spirit and fashioned with the influence of the world is to lose sight of God's purpose in life and duty. Christians should be consecrated to God's service, acquire holy habits, and foster holy desires. They are chosen and blessed to set forth God's glory—"to shew forth the *praises* (virtues, excellences) of Him who hath called you out of darkness (ignorance, sin and misery) into His marvellous light." (1 Pet. ii. 9).

WORLDLY SORROW.—*Verses 1, 2.*

“Man’s days are full of trouble from one source or another” (Job v. 7.) “Sorrow is at once the lot, the trial, and the privilege of man,” says Helps. But how different the spirit and the method of expressing it. Israel must not mourn like other nations for the dead. Wordly sorrow is most unbecoming in God’s people.

**I. It is excessive in its nature.** It is often assumed and unnatural, noisy and passionate in demonstration. Heathens went to excess in their wild paroxysms of grief. It was not the grief of civilisation and softness; but the grief of a savage and a child.

**II. It is injurious in its results.** It was common among Canaanites and Phœnicians to cut themselves. Excitable nations of the east often made ghastly incisions on their faces, and in other parts of the body, with sharp instruments. The Persians, Abyssinians, Bedouins, and other races, still practise this. It was deemed a token of respect for the dead, and well-pleasing to deities who presided over the grave. The true Israelite is created in God’s image and must not mourn thus. Human suffering and woe are not acceptable to God. That sorrow which leads to bodily injury and drives away from God is the sorrow of Judas who hanged himself—a sorrow which results in no amendment. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. vii. 10).

**III. It is hopeless in its aim.** It does not propitiate God, nor does it affect the dead. The Christian is taught that God rules all events. Departed friends not taken by chance or accident. They are in the hands of God, and, if His children, beyond the reach of harm. Through “the shadow of death” the believer looks by faith. The “eternal night” of classic authors is illuminated by the resurrection of Christ, who has “become the first fruits of them that slept.” Jesus has “abolished death” (taken away its power, made it of no effect) “and hath brought life and immortality” (incorruptibility) “to light through (by means of) the gospel” (2 Tim. i. 10). We can, therefore, see through and beyond the grave—know our own lot and the lot of dear friends. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. iv. 13).

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *Three great blessings.*  
1. Election, “chosen.” 2. Adoption, “children.” 3. Sanctification, “holy people.”

*Distinguished Marks.* Distinguished,  
1. By the grace of God which made them. 2. By the Providence of God. A herd of poor slaves could not have gained their place and constituted themselves into a nation. 3. By the laws of God. Laws wiser than any other nation. 4. By the purpose of God. Separated from the rest of the world.

Associated with great privileges and destined to spread great principles.

*Thy God*, peculiarly thine as opposed to every other. The object of thy affection and trust (Ps. lxxiii. 24-28). “God bases all the prescriptions of His law, as the Great Lawgiver, on the ground that those that were to obey were his own chosen, beloved, redeemed, and sanctified people. He begins by declaring first of all, their grand relationship to Him as the Lord their God the King of Israel. “Ye are,” by



adopting love, "the children of the Lord your God." A Covenant God; yours because He has given Himself to you; yours because ye have deliberately chosen Him; and with a solemn oath have promised, "We will serve the Lord our God." Well, upon this strong ground, this sure foundation, as affectionate as it is sure, He says, "you shall not imitate the heathen by

mourning for the dead as they mourn; ' or transferred from Judaism to Christianity. "You shall not weep for your dead as others weep, who have no hope; having a better, surer, nobler prospect, alike of the state of the soul, and the emergence from the grave of the earthly shrine it has left behind it."—*Dr. Cumming.*

#### GOD'S PROVISION FOR MAN'S TABLE.—*Verses 3-20.*

Here we have regulations concerning animal food for the Israelites, and cautions against defilement by contact with dead flesh, which they were not permitted to eat. Substantially the restrictions are a repetition, with a little variation of the rules given in Lev. xi. Though minute and apparently trivial these rules are full of instruction and meaning. They set forth God's provision for man's table.

**I. Provision, Divine in its source.** Israel could not have procured it and would not have known without Divine teaching what was good for them. We can neither catch a fish nor shoot a bird without a Providence. We are helpless and dependent as Israel was, taught to pray for daily bread and to recognise that power which can "furnish a table in the wilderness" Ps. lxxviii. 19.

**II. Provision good in quality.** Nothing unclean, nothing unwholesome, was specified. Not anything was to be eaten apt to stimulate gross and sensual passions, or to foster coarse tastes and degrading habits. The laws were subservient to sanitary and religious ends, and the food provided was suitable and distinct from that of idolatrous nations. Divine wisdom decided what was best for the purpose. They were thus preserved in health and vigour, and ceremonially kept from the taint of death.

**III. Provisions abundant in quantity.** There was no stint in beasts, birds or fish. The articles of food were nutritious and abundant. God's legislation for our lower reminds of His care for our higher nature. There is no lack anywhere. Temporally and spiritually, means are provided to satisfy our wants and promote our happiness. Let us remember our Benefactor, for Henry says, that we cannot put a morsel of food into our mouths till God puts it into our hands—discern kindness not only in prescribing, but in prohibiting, and be grateful to "the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Tim. vi. 17). For a man may be blessed with riches, wealth, and honour; want nothing, "yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof." (Ecc. vi. 2).

#### TOUCHING THE UNCLEAN.—*Verses 3, 21.*

By eating creatures that are unclean, which are described as "abominable," the people made themselves abominable and repulsive. Hence the admonition to abstain from objects of defilement which rob of holy communion with God.

**I. Defilement is easy.** Involuntary or accidental contact was enough. It was difficult, if not impossible to avoid the touch. So with the attractions

and sins of "this present world." Because it is near and present, it affects the senses, influences the mind, and directs the life. "Touch not, taste not, handle not" its pleasures.

**II. Defilement is serious in its consequences.** It interrupted fellowship with God and excluded from the sanctuary for a time. It prohibited the touch of sacred things and all intercourse with the legally clean. What a type of sin in polluting the soul and excluding from heaven. "This ye know, that no unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Ep. v. 5).

**III. Defilement must be avoided by strenuous effort.** This rule necessitated Israel to pay great attention to cleanliness, personal and national. "Touch not—eat not." If there were no touching there would be no eating, no participation. (Eve and Achan). Daniel refused the food from the king's table. Entire separation is enjoined. Watch, pray and keep your garments unspotted from the world. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord (separated, Hos. iv. 17), and touch not the (any) unclean thing." (2 Cor. vi. 17).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 4. *These and these only.* 1. That ye may be at mine appointment for your very meat, as chief Lord of all. 2. That there may be a difference betwixt you and all other people. 3. That ye may be taught to study purity, and know that the very creatures are defiled by man's sin. 4. That ye may have these things as "a shadow of things to come" (Col. ii. 16, 17).—*Trapp; Lev. xi.*

Ver. 6. *Cheweth cud.* In this combination of *parting the hoof and chewing the cud*, the union of two *moral* and *spiritual* qualities is supposed to be spiritualised, viz., *sure walking* in the way of God's laws (Rom. ii. 18; iii. 20–22; Gal. ii. 12–14; Ep. v. 15) and meditation upon it (Ps. i. 2).—*Wordsworth.* The hearer of God's word ought to be like those animals that chew the cud; he ought not only to feed upon it, but to ruminate upon it (*St. Aug.* on Ps. 46). *Clean and unclean.* 1. *A Sanitary enactment.* Unclean were most unhealthy in warm climates, and even now their flesh is not considered wholesome and nutritious. 2. *An argument for separation.* The distinction in meats would prevent intercourse with heathen nations, and contamination with idola-

try and vice. It kept them distinct and peculiar, and raised an impassable barrier to evil customs—a barrier stronger than difference of creed, diversity of language, and system of polity. Christians must stand and live apart from worldly maxims and customs. 3. *A type of holy life.* The injunction to abstain from unclean meats was a symbol of the holiness and purity that became them as people of God. It set forth that kingdom which "is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). "The ordinance of Moses was for the *whole* nation. It was not like the Egyptian law, intended for priests alone; nor like the Hindoo law, binding only on the twice-born Brahmin; nor like the Parsee law, to be apprehended and obeyed only by those disciplined in spiritual matters. It was a law for the people, for every man, woman, and child of the race chosen to be "a kingdom of priests, an holy nation" (Ex. xix. 6). It was to be one of the foreshadows of the higher spiritual quality, of the better seed of Abraham, which was, in later ages, pronounced "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet.

ii. 9; *cf.* Is. lxi. 6; 1 Cor. x. 17).—*Speak. Com.*

Vers. 3-20. In this provision of food we see—1. *A mark of divine condescension.* If kings legislated for the diet of their people, is it beneath the King of Israel to appoint the food for his chosen people? "All that we know of God," says Dr. Cumming, "in creation, in providence, in redemption, leads us to see that He takes as much care of what the world calls, in its ignorance, little things, as He does of what the world thinks, in

equal ignorance, great and weighty things." 2. *A proof of divine benevolence.* It is kind to provide at all. But what thought indicated, in the choice of animals which multiplied slowly, which were not difficult to obtain, found without leaving the camp, and without danger and contact with heathens around them. All this intended to reclaim and bless!

In ev'ry way, in every sense,  
Man is the care of Providence;  
And whenso'er he goeth wrong,  
The errors to himself belong.  
S. BUTLER.

### SEETHING A KID.—*Verse 21.*

This injunction is here repeated, and must therefore be of some importance (*cf.* Ex. xxiii. 19, xxxiv. 26). He may view it—

I. As a protest against superstition. The repetition immediately after directions concerning the first fruits of harvest, indicates specific reference to heathen custom. Idolators at the end of harvest seethed a kid in its mother's milk and sprinkled the broth as a magical charm on fields and gardens, to make them more productive. Israel must not imitate this custom. None of the gods can send the shower and fertilize the earth. "He causeth the grass to grow for cattle, and herb for the service of man."

II. As a law of humanity. There was great cruelty in making the milk of the mother, intended for the sustenance of the kid, the means of its destruction. Some have called this prohibition "an excess of legislative refinement," but in whatever light we look at this custom, it had an appearance of barbarity. "This was a gross and unwholesome dish, calculated to kindle up animal and ferocious passions, and on this account, as well as its barbarity, Moses may have forbidden it." "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty '*unjust violence*,' 'homesteads of violence.'"—*Kay.* (Ps. lxxiv. 20.) But the religion of the Bible is humane (*cf.* Lev. xxii. 28; Deut. xxii. 16; xxv. 4.) Rational creatures must be treated kindly, and we must shun everything that blunts our worst sensibilities. If God has tender care for animals so should we have. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." (Prov. xii. 10.)

I would not enter on my list of friends,  
(Tho' graced with polished manners and fine sense,  
Yet wanting sensibility), the man  
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.—*Cowper.*

### THE DEDICATION OF THE TENTH.—*Verses 22, 23; 28, 29.*

A titling of the produce of cultivated ground and the firstling of herds and flocks were brought to the sanctuary every year. Here a sacrifice meal was prepared for Israel and their households that they might rejoice before the Lord and learn to fear Him always.



**I. To meet the claims of God.** There must be devout acknowledgment of God as the source of all mercies, without whose care the earth would not yield its produce, nor the flocks their increase. Corn, wine and oil come from Him. In every department of life we must recognise His rights. The seventh of our time, the first fruits of the field and the first-born of the family, the revenues of the family and the Church should be given to him as Owner and Proprietor of all things. "Well may we think our substance due when we owe ourselves," says *Bp. Hall*.

**II. To support the works of piety.** The claims of creative right have strengthened by the infinite price of the Redeemer's blood. Apart from what is applied to personal, family and civil uses, some portion, if not a tenth, is required for worship, evangelisation and humanity. 1. *Religiously*. The ministers and ordinances of God's house must be upheld. Contributions are put upon the principle of willing gifts, rather than of stipulated demands. Though God commanded Israel to bring their offerings, no law compelled the disobedient. Thus we are treated with confidence and consideration. God honours men by permitting them to expend their treasures and skill on sacred edifices and to render solemn worship to Him. 2. *Socially*. "The Levite and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow shall come and shall eat and be satisfied." In works of charity we gladden others. The helpless and fatherless must never be forgotten. Real generosity is the surest way of thriving. He that gives shall receive, and he that scatters shall increase. The liberal soul shall be made fat. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barn be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Prov. iii. 9, 10).

#### SYSTEMATIC PROVISION FOR BENEFICENT WORK.

On this subject we may collect and arrange a few thoughts from a pamphlet by the Rev. John Ross. Such provision is—

**I. The duty of God's people.** In Jewish law God claimed tithes and gifts for the worship of the sanctuary and the necessities of the poor. Conspicuous features of these demands are—the priority of God's claim—that *provision* for it be made before man's self-enjoyment, that it bear some suitable proportion to the Divine glory and grace, and that for fulness and power, *system* is essential; *i.e., that the work of God be provided for before man's indulgence*. (Lev. xix; Num. xviii; Deut. xiv). The New Testament has also its plan of meeting God's claim, containing the same elements of *priority, certainty, proportion* and *system*. See 1 Cor. xvi. 2, sustained and illustrated by the weighty arguments and motives of 2 Cor. chaps. viii., ix.

**II. The Financial Law of Christ.** Christ is sole King in His Church. The constitution of this church is Christian, not Jewish. The apostle Paul was the organiser of churches, and the first epistle to the Corinthians is the great Church organising epistle. In its closing chapter the apostle institutes a system of finance. This system bears the character of an *authoritative and repeated law*. "As I have *given order* to the Churches of Galatia, *even so do ye*." The method taught by the apostle to provide the revenues of the Church is an expansion of Jewish and Pentecostal church systems, an example for us, an implied and inferential obligation sustained by cumulative and presumptive argument. New Testament institutions are not given with Sinaitic form and severity. They meet us as sacred provisions for urgent occasions. They appeal to a willing heart more than to a legal mind. Christ rules in love, but His will should not have less authority or constraining power on that account. (Jno. vii. 17.)

**III. The necessity of the Age.** The present age needs loftiness of aim, seriousness of feeling and ardour of devotion. Faithful consecration of substance to God, elevated by Christian love to a financial rule of life, would nourish every moral and spiritual principle in the soul. Storing the Lord's portion is the necessity of the age, from its tendency. 1. To check the idolatry of money and to strengthen the love of God in the heart. 2. To meet adequately the demands of religion and humanity. 3. To exhibit the power and beauty of godliness. By a warm Christian liberality—by asserting the supremacy of, and providing for, things spiritual and eternal. By fostering simplicity of life and personal fidelity to God. By liberally sustaining the honour of Christ in the sight of men.

#### DIVINE CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN CIRCUMSTANCES.—*Verses 24, 25.*

In the land of Canaan, however, where the people would be scattered over a great extent of country, there would be many for whom the fulfilment of this command would be very difficult—would in fact appear almost impossible. To meet this difficulty, permission was given for those who lived at a great distance from the sanctuary to sell the tithes at home, provided they could not convey them in kind, and then to spend the money so obtained in the purchase of the things required for the sacrificial meals at the place of the sanctuary.—*Delitzsch.* Here we have—

**I. Divine knowledge of man's circumstances.** "If the place be *too far* for thee." God knows our distance from his house—the effort and strength required to get there, "if the way be *too long* for thee," and the very street and house in which we dwell. "The *street* called straight, and the *house* of Judas." (Acts 9, 11; 10, 6). God's knowledge of human actions and human life in all departments is perfect. He is everywhere present to discern and observe our physical and moral condition. His omniscience extends to all space, and to all creatures.

**II. Divine Provision for Man's Future.** This arrangement was made in anticipation of settlement in Canaan. Thus God's providence goes before us in life. The real meaning of providence is to see to provide beforehand (*pro* and *vides*). "God's providence is mine inheritance," says one. He anticipates our difficulties and wants, and makes provision beforehand for every exigency. "For thou *preventest* (goes before) him with the blessings or goodness." (Ps. xxi. 3).

**III. Divine tenderness for Man's welfare.** God seems to consult man's convenience, does not rigidly exact what he cannot give or do. He is no hard taskmaster, but reasonable in demands (Mat. xxv. 4). We see accommodation to circumstances in the law of sacrifice (Lev. v. 7), in rules for commutation (Lev. 27), and in relaxation of injunctions concerning meat (Deut. xii. 21). The spirit of the command is more important than the letter. For if there be first a willing mind it is accepted, according "to that a man hath, and not according to that a man hath not." (2 Cor. viii. 12).

#### CHARITY AT HOME.—*Verses 28, 29.*

Every third year the tithe was to be devoted to works of charity at home. "Lay it up within thy gates."

**I. Dispensed to the needy.** Widows and orphans, helpless and forsaken, are real objects of charity. "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" is a part of New Testament religion. (Jas. i. 27). Our guests are to be invited from the ranks of the poor. "When thou makest a dinner or supper call not thy friends, lest they bid thee again; but the poor, the maimed, for they cannot recompense thee." (Lev. xiv. 12-14).

**II. Dispensed in a spirit of gratitude.** The rich should be thankful to be able to give, and the poor grateful to receive. God gives no scanty measure to us. Increase of family and of stock, corn and wine in rich abundance. We should cherish a deep sense of our unworthiness, a constant dependence upon the Divine bounty, and to feel that we are the stewards only of the treasures which heaven has put into our hands. "Who am I and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of thine own have we given Thee."

**III. Dispensed under the blessing of God.** "That the Lord thy God may bless thee." We better enjoy what we have by sharing it with others. There is exquisite delight in acts of kindness. That which is cordially devoted to the cause of God and the benefit of man, lives, in its blessed influence, in human hearts—in immortal fruits—of earthly virtues, in perpetual memorial before God and in eternal harvest of joy. "What I saved I lost; what I spent I had; what I gave I have," said J. J. Gurney. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Man is God's image: but a poor man is

Christ's stamp to boot. Both images regard.

God reckons for him; counts the favour His.

Write "So much given to God." Thou shalt be heard.

Let thy alms go before, and keep heaven's gate

Open for thee; or both may come too late.

HERBERT.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 21. *Holy people.* He hath severed you from the mass of the profane world, and picked you out to be jewels for Himself; He hath set you apart for this end, that you may be holy to Him, as the Hebrew word that signifies *holiness* imports *setting apart*, or fitting for a peculiar use; be not then untrue to his design, *He hath not called you to uncleanness, but unto holiness* (1 Thes. iv. 7). Therefore be ye holy. It is sacrilege for you to dispose of yourselves after the impure manner of the world, and to apply yourselves to any profane use, whom God hath consecrated to Himself.—*Abp. Leighton.*

Ver. 23. *The Lord thy God.* "This is very emphatic, expressive not only of a truth, but of a privilege, and of a special privilege. It imports more

than some who have been denominated rational divines are willing to allow—not simply that Jehovah is our Creator, Preserver, and Sovereign, our Protector, the object of our worship, of our supreme love and adoration; but properly, that he is our portion by a peculiar *covenant relation*. As an evidence of this, it deserves to be remarked, that He never proclaims Himself nor is He ever styled in Scripture, "the God of Angels." It must be by virtue of some spiritual transaction, such as never took place with angels, and in which they have no share, that He proclaims Himself our God—all that God or Deity can be to us."

Ver. 22. *The law of the tithe.* 1. A Divine appointment. 2. A rule of Christian liberality. "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the



land, or the fruit of the tree is the Lords; it is Holy unto the Lord." Lev. xxvii. 30 (*cf.* 2 Chron. xxxi. 5, 6, 12, Neh. xiii. 12).

*Consecrated Funds*—how secured; how applied; what results from the application.

Vers. 21, 26, 27. *Social joy in sacrificial meals.* 1. *Its nature* "be-fore the Lord." In His presence, under His control, and bestowed by His mercy. "The joy of the Lord," "True joy is a serious thing," says Bonar. 2. *Its participators.* Levites, strangers, fatherless and widows (ver. 29), representatives of God. "God hath left His poor saints to receive His rents."—*Gurnall*. 3. *Its aim.* Not for mere display nor popularity.

(a) To sanctify home joy. "That mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God. (b) To secure God's favour. "That the Lord may bless thee." "A kind action is never lost." "Kindness begets kindness." "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" (Prov. xix. 17).

Vers. 24-29. *The conscientious discharge of religious duty.* 1. God will have no excuses for disobedience. 2. He makes provision against difficulties in the path of obedience. 3. The spirit of the law may be observed when obedience to the letter is impossible. This is accepted as a real and full obedience.—*Bib. Museum*.

# ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1. *Shall not.* The Christian must not attempt to go with the current of a sinful world; if he does, it will not only hinder, but end his religious progress; but he must go against it, and then every effort of his soul will surely be upward, heavenward, Godward.—*Dr. Davies*.

Ver. 2. *Holy people.* When courtiers come down into the country, the common home-bred people possibly think their habits strange; but they care not for that. "It is the fashion at court." What need then have the Godly to be so tender-foreheaded, to be out of countenance because the world looks on holiness as a singularity? It is the only fashion in the highest court—yea of the King of Kings, Himself.—*Salter*.

Vers. 3-20. *Eat.* Our nature is so intensely symbolical, that where the outward sign of defilement becomes habitual, the inner is too apt to correspond.—(*Mrs Stowe*). *Clean.* Not only man had become unclean, but the irrational creation as well. Sin struck the universe with leprosy to its very heart. Neither four-footed beast,

nor bird, nor reptile, escaped the contagion. The animal creation, therefore, needs to be made clean. Now a certain portion of the human world—the Hebrew nation—has been made clean unto God; but the clean nation must have clean food. Behold, then, a small proportion of the rational and irrational creation made clean by the establishment of the kingdom of God; the remainder of the world, however, continues still in its impurity. But the Gospel undertakes the task of cleansing the *whole universe*.—*Cyndyhan Jones*.

Ver. 9. *Fins and scales* are the means by which the excrescences of fish are carried off, the same as in animals by perspiration. I have never known an instance of disease by eating such fish; but those that have no fins or scales cause, in hot climates, the most malignant disorders when eaten; in many cases they prove a mortal poison.—*Whitlaw*.

Ver. 20. *All clean.* The good things of Providence may be considered as having this inscription, *accipe, redde, cavè*, that is, "accept us as from God,

return us in gratitude to him, and take care not to abuse us.”—*Wilson*.

Ver. 21. *Stranger in gate*. We read in our chronicles of King Oswald, that as he sat at table when a fair silver dish, full of regal delicacies was set before him, and he ready to fall to, hearing from his almoner that there were great store of poor at his gates, piteously crying out for some relief, he did not fill them with words, as “God help them,” “God relieve them !” etc., but commanded his steward presently to take the dish off the table and distribute the meat, then beat the dish all in pieces and cast it among them.—*Holdsworth*.

Vers. 22–27. *Tithe*. It is said of Dr. Samuel Wright that his charity was conducted upon rule ; for which purpose he kept a purse, in which was found this memorandum :—“Some-

thing from all the money I receive to be put into this purse for charitable puposes. From my salary as minister, which is uncertain, a tenth part—from occasional and extraordinary gifts, which are more uncertain, a twentieth part—from copy money of things I print and interest of my estate, a seventh part.”—*Buck*.

Ver. 29. *The Lord thy God*. A friend calling upon the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, during his last illness, said to him, “Sir, you have given us many good advices, pray what are you now doing with your own soul ?” “I am doing with it,” said he, “what I did forty years ago ; I am resting on that word, ‘*I am the Lord thy God*,’ and on this I mean to die.”

Should boundless wealth increase my store,  
 Can wealth my cares beguile ?  
 I should be wretched still, and poor,  
 Without thy blissful smile.

## CHAPTER XV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—The rules for the relief of the poor (Levites, strangers, widows, and orphans) by the triennial tithe are followed by others which forbid oppression.

1. **Seven years**. During the last of the seven, *i.e.*, Sabbatical year (Ex. xxi. 2 ; xxviii. 11 ; Lev. xxv. 4 ; Jer. xxxiv. 14). **Release**, let go, let lie applied to land (Ex. xxxiii. 11), and must be taken in the same sense here. “The command of the older legislation is here amplified. Not only is the land to have its ‘release’ or ‘rest’ for the year, but the debt also.”

2. **Manner**, *cf.* chap. xix. 4 ; 1 Kings ix. 15. **Creditor**. Master, *i.e.*, owner of a loan, the lender. **Release it**, not by absolute discharge of the debt, but the payment was not to be pressed that year, during which there was total suspension of land cultivation. **Exact, lit.**, press or urge his neighbour to pay. **Brother**. An Israelite in opposition to a stranger or foreigner. **Called**, render “because proclamation has been made of the Lord’s release.” (*Speak. Com.*) The verb is impersonal (“they call”), as Gen. xi. 9 ; xvi. 14. The Sabbatical year, like the year of Jubilee, was proclaimed for Jehovah, in honour of Him, sanctified to Him, and according to His command.

3. **Foreigner**. Not one who lived among the Israelites, for whom they must have pity ; but a stranger of another nation not related to them at all, one who was not bound by this restriction and who could earn income in the seventh as in other years.

4. **Save**. The debt for the year must be released except when there would be no poor borrower. If he was rich, the restoration of the loan might be demanded even in this year. The *margin* “to the end that there be no poor,” etc.—that none be reduced to poverty and distress. **Bless**. The creditor would be no loser by not exacting his debt, for God would specially bless the land.

5. **Only if they were obedient**.

6. **Lend**. Remarkably fulfilled in Jewish history. **Reign**, rule, because superior in wealth (*cf.* xxviii. 1).

7-11. The foregoing laws might operate to the disadvantage of the poor in seeking relief. Moses exhorts them not to cherish a mean and selfish spirit, but give liberally and God will bless them.

7. **Harden.** Do not suppress natural feeling and compassion.

8. **Sufficient.** Whatever he needs.

9. **Thought, *lit.*** a word of Belial or worthlessness in thy heart, by saying the seventh year is at hand; I shall not be able to demand what I lend. **Evil, *i.e.***, thou cherishest ill feeling (cf. xxviii. 54, 56). **Lord against,** brings down anger upon thee.

11. **Never cease,** for sin never ceases. Poverty permitted partly as punishment of sin, and partly to exercise benevolent and charitable feelings.

12-18. **Hebrew servants' freedom.** Provisions for the poor are followed naturally by rules for the manumission of Hebrew slaves.

12. **Sold.** "The last extremity of an insolvent debtor when his house or land was not sufficient to cancel his debt, was to be sold as a slave with his family" (Lev. xxv. 39; 2 Kings iv. 1; Neh. v. 1-13; Job xxiv. 9; Matt. xviii. 25). These commands are repeated from Ex. xxi. 2-6, with explanations characteristic of Deut.

13, 14. **Empty.** This an addition. Liberal provision must be made to aid in regaining original status in society. **Furnish, *lit.*** lay on his neck, *i.e.*, load him. For they were once redeemed from slavery.

15, 16. **If he say.** The slave might choose to remain with his master instead of going into freedom; then he was not forced to go.

17. His ear must be bored with *an awl*, and fastened to the door—a symbol of permanent servitude (cf. Ex. xxi. 4-6). If a slave determines to have freedom, it must not be considered hard.

18. He has been worth a *double-hired servant*—"earned and produced so much, that if you had been obliged to keep a day-labourer in his place it would have cost you twice as much." (*Keil.*) He had been without wages for a fixed time, whereas hired servants were engaged yearly (Lev. xxv. 53), at most for three years (Isa. xvi. 14).

19-23. **Dedication of the firstborn of cattle.** *Firstling*, the firstborn, was dedicated to God as a memorial of deliverance from Egypt, virtually sanctified the whole (Rom. xi. 16), and was a pledge to all the people of their national union with Him (Ex. xxiii. 30; Lev. xxii. 27). **No work.** The injunction is added that animals thus set apart were not to be used for earthly purposes, by shearing sheep or yoking bullocks to the plough. They were to be offered year by year and eaten before the Lord. If any were blemished, blind or lame they must not be offered (ver. 21); but might, like ordinary animals, be used for food, and could be eaten in all cities of the land.

### THE YEAR OF RELEASE.—Verses 1-7

In this legislation we have wonderful provision for the convenience of Israel, and striking contrast between the wisdom, equity, and mercy of the Hebrew lawgiver and the highest pagan laws. Every seventh year was a year of release, in which the ground rested from culture and the servants freed from debt.

**I. The persons to be released.** The Sabbatic year was a year of great relief, therefore indicating great distress. The subjects requiring help are described in various terms. 1. *Foreigners not to be discharged.* They were outside this arrangement. A stranger from another nation, distinguished from one who lived among them and had claim to benevolence, had no right to remission and privileges. This gives protection to an Israelite and displays no hatred or injustice to a foreigner. "He could earn his usual income in the seventh as in other years, and therefore is not exonerated from liability to discharge a debt any more in the one than the others." "Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it." 2. *Neighbours must be released.* "He shall not exact it



of his neighbour or of his brother." Fellow-Israelites were members of one society and regarded as a "common brotherhood," a type of "the household of faith," enjoying equal rights and privileges; sharing that divine love which embraces all and offers pardon to all. 3. *These neighbours are described as debtors.* "Every creditor that lendeth to his neighbour"—the poor borrowed not for trade nor extravagance, but for subsistence. He could not pay without reducing himself to poverty, or seeking relief in other countries which would be wrong. Kindness must be shown by the lender and gratitude by the borrower. The rich are indebted to the poor as well as the poor dependent upon the rich. God has bound all classes into one family.

**II. The reasons for releasing them.** Several considerations urge obedience to this law. 1. *The honour of God is concerned.* "Because it is the Lord's release." God claims regard to His authority, and acknowledgment of His providence. We depend upon Him and hold all property from Him. Release of debts was an act for God, the poorest sacrifice, the meanest labour offered to Him are sacred. Purity of motive dignifies toil and renders benevolent acts acceptable to God. 2. *Extreme poverty was prevented.* "To the end there shall be no more poor among you" (margin, ver. 4). Exaction of debts would have reduced many to great straits at a time when there was no labour nor produce. Poverty would be a reproach to the nation and the destruction of its people. The Great Shepherd of Israel considers the poorest of His flock, and like a king protects those who dwell under His shadow. "In the multitude of people is the king's honour; but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince" (Prov. xiv. 28). 3. *The favour of God was secured.* "For the Lord shall bless thee" (ver. 4). They would lose nothing by obedience. God would grant a special blessing on the land. Selfishness evades obligation under cover of prudence. But what we give is a loan to the Lord, who pays again with interest. He gives security in His word which can never fail. Though He is indebted to none, but has a right to all, yet He condescends to be surety for the poor and debtor to His true Helper. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" (Prov. xix. 17).

#### THE RESTRAINTS OF OPPRESSION.—*Verses 7-11.*

The previous injunctions might prevent the poor from getting loans. Creditors might take advantage and become exacting towards the borrower. Moses admonishes them not to be hard-hearted and oppressive, but to cherish a spirit of charity and act with liberality. We have safeguards against oppression, checks upon selfishness and rapacity.

**I. By Providential Interposition.** "The Lord's release," which no authority could prevent. In this seventh year there was rest for the soil, pause in the race for wealth, and protection for the poor. In national and domestic affairs God often interferes. Tyrants upon the throne, and tormentors in the cottage, are restrained, delayed and frustrated in their design. In the ambition of Lot and the aggressions of Nebuchadnezzar, in the bondage of Egypt, and the revolutions of France, we had sad warnings against covetousness and haste to be rich. Grasping by unjust means will end in shame and fill with the curse of an avenging God.

The cries of orphans and the oppressor's eye  
Doth reach the stars.—*Dryden.*

**II. By the enforcement of liberality.** "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him" (verse 8). The claims of poorer brethren were to be generously and gladly met. The evasion of this duty was a sinful violation of the spirit of the law (verse 9). It was designed to restrain the selfishness of the creditor and prevent him from pressing too hard upon the weak. "The rich ruleth over the poor" too often in harshness (Prov. xxii. 7). Man becomes an alien to his brother, the victim of his meanness, not the object of his sympathy. The warnings of God's word and providence are loud and repeated. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall also cry himself but shall not be heard" (Prov. xxi. 13).

**III. By the cultivation of kindly feelings.** "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart" (verse 9). We must not only bestow the gift, but cherish right feeling. It is possible to "give all our goods to feed the poor," without one atom of true charity of heart (1 Cor. xiii. 3). "Bowels of mercies and kindness" must be the mark and source of our liberality (express yearnings which touch our inward parts—Gen xliii. 30; Jer. xxxi. 20; Luke i. 78) (Col. iii. 12). We should think, feel, and act as God does, who is "pitiful and of tender mercy."

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?  
 Draw near them, then, in being merciful:  
 Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge.—*Shakespeare.*

#### CONSIDERATION OF THE POOR.—*Verses 9–11.*

Society is separated into distinct classes, yet bound together into one harmonious whole. If rich and poor would each do their duty in their stations, they would become reciprocally a blessing and support to the other. Special consideration must be given to the poor. For—

**I. The oppression of the poor is offensive to God.** "And he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be a sin unto thee." God identifies Himself with their condition and cause, and sets infinite value upon every man. All are equal before Him. "There is no respect of persons before God." Rigorous measures and harshness were distinctly forbidden, and grievously offensive to God (Lev. xxv. 39–43).

**II. The cry of the poor is heard by God.** "He cry unto the Lord." The sufferings of the distressed have a thousand tongues and appeal direct to God. The law condemned robbery for a single night (Lev. xix. 13), uttered woe against him "that useth his neighbour's service without wages" (Jer. xxii. 13); and fearful judgement fell upon those who "oppressed the hireling in his wages" (Mal. iii. 5). "The hire of labourers kept back by fraud crieth, and the cries enter the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (Jas. v. 4).

**III. Liberality to the poor will be rewarded by God.** "For this thing the Lord will bless thee in all thy works" (verse 10). Whatsoever is done to poor disciples is done to their Master—"Ye have done it unto me" and will in no wise lose its reward. "Liberality," says one, "is the most beneficial traffic that can be—it is bringing our wares to the best market—it is letting out our money into the best hands, we thereby lend our money to God, who repays with vast usury; an hundred to one is the rate He allows at present, and above a hundred millions to one He will render hereafter (Luke 18–30). "Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *The Lord's release.* 1. Devised by His wisdom. 2. Revealing his goodness and grace. 3. Typifying "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke iv. 19).

Ver. 6. *Lending and borrowing.* 1. Some borrow and are never able to lend. 2. Others borrow and forget to pay back. 3. He that borrows is servant to him that lends (Prov. xxii. 7). He must be dependent and often, too, servile. Try not to borrow at all. "He that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing." Owe no man anything but love. "Guard against that poverty which is the result of carelessness or extravagance. Pray earnestly, labour diligently. Should you come to poverty by the misfortunes of the times, submit to your lot humbly, bear it patiently, cast yourself in childlike dependence upon your God."—(*Geier on Prov. xxii. 7*).

Vers. 7, 8. *Hand and heart.* The heart hardened shuts the hand and the poor suffer. The heart sympathetic opens the hands and the poor are relieved. The hand the expression of the heart. "My hand of iron," said Napoleon, "was not at the extremity of my arm, it was immediately connected with my head." "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack (a deceitful) hand" (Prov. x. 4).

Vers. 7-10. *The claims of the poor upon the rich.* 1. Claims of help in their poverty. 2. Claims of sympathy in distress. *Triple Almoners*—the feeling heart, the helping hand, the pure eye. "He can never keep his covenant with his God that makes not a covenant with his eyes."—*Bp. Hall*.

Ver. 11. *Poor shall never cease out of the land.* 1. The inequalities of life. *Physically* we have a thousand varieties, and all possible contrasts. *Mentally* there are feeble-minded and strong-minded giants and dwarfs. *Socially* one lives in luxury and clothed with fine linen, another is covered with sores and clad in rags. 2. The appointment of Providence. We have the poor, notwithstanding our legislation, "poor laws," and "almshouses." "Ye have the poor always with you." 3. The bond to unite men together. Inequalities serve to bind men one to another. The man of labour needs the man of capital, and the man of capital the man of labour. The man who sets class against class and teaches them to regard each other with suspicion and ill-will is an enemy to society. "The Lord," says Bp. Sanderson, "in His wise providence, hath so disposed the kings of the world that there should ever be some rich to relieve the necessities of the poor, and some poor to exercise the charity of the rich." "There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor" (2 Sam. xii. 1).

*Duty of the Church towards the poor.* Consider—I. That poverty is a real evil, which without any impeachment of the goodness or wisdom of Providence, the constitution of the world actually admits. II. That providential appointment of this evil, is subservience to the general good, brings a particular obligation upon men in civilised society, to concur for the immediate extinction of the evil wherever it appears.—*Bp. Horsley*.

THE LIBERATION OF SLAVES.—*Verses 12-17.*

Slavery existed among the Hebrews in a totally distinct spirit and method from modern slavery. Human traffic and human cruelty were punished and forbidden (*cf.* Ex. xxi. 26 ; Lev. xxv. 39-43), servitude was limited in time



and relieved by a spirit of generosity. Beyond six years' service a Jewish bondman need not go. The Sabbatic year brought liberty, if he thought fit to claim it. Provision was not only made for the forgiveness of debts, but for the freedom of debtors. There was *personal* release, hence learn—

**I. The infinite value God sets upon man.** Kidnapping was a most atrocious crime in the time of Moses. In Egypt, bloody wars were carried on for that purpose, and in heathen countries slaves offered for sale were obtained in this way. Kidnapping is a crime against the person only a little short of murder, since it deprives of liberty, which makes life dear. Many would prefer death to slavery. It is a calamity most terrible, inflicting misery for life. "The sum of all villainies," says Wesley. God has made man in His own image, and exalted him above the brutes. The poorest and most enslaved are stamped with divine value. He that diminishes this value and looks upon his fellow men as "goods and chattels," he that mutilates or injures them will be amenable to "the Judge of all."

**II. The wonderful provision God has made for man's freedom.** Freedom is the birthright of man; it should neither be bartered nor taken away by violence. If lost at any time through temporary causes, it must not be forgotten nor destroyed. In these demands for the rights of slaves we see the wisdom of the Divine Lawgiver, the rectitude of His laws, and the natural rights of His creatures. We are reminded also of provision in Jesus Christ, not from temporal but spiritual bondage—a provision (1) universal, (2) free, and (3) divine. "He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, deliverance to the captives," etc. (Luke iv. 18, 19).

**III. The true spirit with which this freedom must be granted.** The value of a gift often depends upon the spirit in which it is bestowed. 1. *The spirit of love.* "Thy brother." We must forgive, love, and help as brethren. "All things are easy to love," says Augustine. When Achilles was asked what works he found most easy, he answered, "Those which I undertake for my friends." 2. *The spirit of forgiveness.* However great the loan or debt, it must be forgiven. "The highest exercise of charity is charity towards the uncharitable. (*Buckminster.*)" 3. *The spirit of liberality.* Liberality ungrudging. "Thine heart shall not be grieved" (verse 10); disinterested, "open thine hand wide;" extensive, "lend him sufficient for his need" (verse 8). "The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand." 4. *The spirit of gratitude.* "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt" (verse 15.) God delivered them from bondage and enriched them with spoils. What base ingratitude to be insensible for mercies received! What sin not to acknowledge or repay them! As God treats us so we must treat one another. Forgive without reluctance and request; help liberally and cheerfully and God's blessing will rest upon us and upon our posterity.

#### PERPETUAL SERVICE CHOSEN.—Verses 16–18.

The Hebrew slave was kindly treated, might actually love his master and value the security which he enjoyed in his service more than freedom. He might be unwilling to break up the family, and wish to remain for ever in his servitude. "If he say, I will not go away from thee," etc. Then a formal act was necessary to seal the covenant.

**I. The spirit in which the servitude was chosen.** 1. It was a *voluntary* choice. "I will not go." The master did not compel the slave to stay. God

does not rule us by force and physical law, like stars and seas. There is no true service where there is compulsion. Jesus appeals to the will. "*Will ye be my disciples?*" 2. It was a *choice of love*. "He loveth thee and thine house." Affection may grow up between slaves and masters. The Roman slaves would endure severest tortures rather than betray or accuse their owners. If the law of love ruled more in domestic affairs, between masters and servants, employers and employed, it would sweeten toil and secure peace and prosperity. "God counts that free service which love dictates and not necessity."—(*Augustine*.) "*Lovest thou me.*"

What love can do, that dares love attempt.—*Shakspeare*.

**II. The badge by which it was distinguished.** Voluntary sacrifice of freedom was ratified by a significant ceremony and distinguished by a certain mark. The servant's ear was put to the door-post and bored through with an awl, by the sanctions of the judges (*cf.* Ex. xxi. 5, 6). If the process was not painful, there was a manifest dishonour willingly endured. We have to bear the cross to endure shame and reproach, if not bodily sufferings, for our Divine Master. Slaves were branded by their owners. Paul gloried in *the marks* (stigmas, brands) of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. vi. 17). Let us give ourselves to Him, delight in His service, and never be afraid nor ashamed to confess Him before men.

#### THE SABBATIC YEAR.—*Verses 1-18.*

This year, like the Jubilee, was a memorable time. Regarding it in its evangelical aspects, notice—

**I. The method of introducing it.** A solemn, loud and universal proclamation was made. A type of the earnest and importunate call of the gospel—the "glad tidings of great joy." The priests, not civil magistrates, were to make the proclamation. They acted by the authority of God. Ministers must preach the gospel in God's name to every creature.

**II. The blessings which it brought.** These symbolise the blessings of redemption in Christ Jesus. 1. *Release from debt*. "In whom we have forgiveness of sins." 2. *Removal from bondage*. Introduction to a new condition, a fresh start in life. "Liberty wherewith Christ makes us free." 3. *Checks to evil*. By extirpating evil from the "heart" and "eye," by cultivating kindly feeling and uniting into one common brotherhood. 4. *Establishment of peace and repose*. Peace among men; repose amidst agitation and revolution in society, amidst pressure of population, unequal distribution of wealth and the selfishness of mankind. Christianity allies itself with everything that is free, generous and just. Let it shed its own glorious light on home and workshop, in social customs and civil laws. Then truth and righteousness will advance, and angels again may sing "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will amongst men."

#### DEDICATION OF THE FIRSTBORN.—*Verses 19-23.*

"First fruits" seem to be the offerings of natural piety among all nations. God demanded from Israel the setting apart (Ex. xiii. 11) and the consecration of the firstborn of man and beast.

**I. As a divine claim upon all.** The first and choicest of all we have—property, time, intellect, wealth and affections must be given to His service.

No bullock did servile work. Nothing must be given to the world. God has a perfect right to all redeemed life. This life should be without blemish and offence. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's."

**II. As a representative of entire consecration.** The first represents the whole. Only a whole or perfect creature could represent the offering of a man's heart and life to God (Mat. i. 8). Nothing must be kept back—"All for Jesus." "Present your *bodies* (i.e., yourselves, your persons) a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable" (Rom. xii. 1).

**III. As an indication of the spirit of the worshipper.** References to passages will show the frequency of these injunctions, and the danger there was of disregarding them. 1. *A spirit of holiness.* There must be no legal defect, no blemish in the offerings. God demands rectitude of heart and life. 2. *A spirit of readiness.* There must be no forgetfulness, no unwillingness, but readiness to offer. "Thou shalt not *delay* to offer the first of thy ripe fruits" (Ex. xxii. 29). 3. *A spirit of fellowship.* The offering of the firstborn brought them into God's presence, taught dependence upon Him, and was a means of intercourse with God.

**IV. As a type of the perfect offering of Jesus.** Christ was the firstborn of all creatures—a sacrifice, a substitute for us, without spot or blemish. To Him all firstlings and firstborn pointed. He offered Himself to God in life and death, and with Him was God well pleased. "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 12-15. *Freedom.* I. Condition from which released. Debt, bondage and degradation. A picture of helpless sinners, sold under sin, and indebted to law. II. Method of release by divine appointment and proclamation. "The Lord's release." *The release of bond-servants.* In this ordinance we may see—I. An encouraging emblem. It represents—1. The redemption which God vouchsafes to His people. 2. The mercy which He exercises towards His redeemed. II. An instructive lesson. We are to regard God's mercies as—1. A pattern for our imitation. 2. A notice for our exertion.—*Rev. C. Simeon, M.A.*

Vers. 14, 15. *Poverty.* 1. A test of civility and kindness. 2. A touchstone of friendship and sympathy. 3. A reminder of life's changes. "He travels safe and not unpleasantly, who is guarded by poverty and guided by love."—*Sir P. Sidney.*

Vers. 16, 17. *Voluntary servitude.* 1. The Master loved. "He loveth thee," good, lenient and kind. When we enter the service of any master we enquire after his character, the nature of his employment, the support which he affords, and the rewards which he offers. Jesus is our Master, our only Master, good and powerful. 2. The service entered. Reasonable, cheerful, and life-long. God's service is perfect freedom, holy and satisfactory. Enter this service now. Continue in it "unto the end."

Vers. 19-23. *Dedications of firstlings.* 1. In remembrance of deliverance from the house of bondage. That which is spared by special providence should be solemnly dedicated to God. Hence—2. This claim of the firstborn rests upon divine goodness and grace. Not upon the natural proprietorship of God as Creator of all things; but upon the grace of the call. Israel was



a consecrated because a redeemed people. Because Jehovah had delivered their firstborn, they were to be sanctified to Him." "It is mine."

Ver. 21. *Blemished life.* 1. God only accepts the perfect. 2. God has given the perfect, through which He will bless man. Man is guilty before God. Cannot offer the fruit of his body, the firstlings of his flocks, for the sin of his soul. But in Jesus "our

righteousness," we are accepted and blessed.

Ver. 23. *Blood.* 1. Blood spilt, life lost, death deserved through guilt. 2. The animal offered, atonement made for guilt. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. xvii. 10, 11).

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1. *Release.* It remains with you then to decide whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages, to run a career of virtuous emulation in everything great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition, and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements, till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall, and wrapt in eternal gloom.—*R. Hall.*

Vers. 2-4. *Creditor.* There is greatness in being generous, and there is only simple justice in satisfying creditors. Generosity is the part of the soul raised above the vulgar.—*Goldsmith.*

Ver. 4. *Bless thee.* If then we will needs lay up, where should we rather repose it, than in the Christian's treasury? The poor man's hand is the treasury of Christ. All my superfluity shall be hoarded up, where I know it will be safely kept.—*Bp. Hall.*

Vers. 7-11. *Not a thought in thy wicked heart.* Extreme vigour is sure to arm everything against it, and at

length to relax into supreme neglect. (*Burke*). A desire to resist oppression is implanted in the nature of man.—*Tacitus.*

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;  
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the poor.  
*T. Gray.*

Ver. 8. *Open thine hand.* Howard's rule—so nobly expounded by his own self-denying devotedness—is a fine comment on this. "That our own superfluities give way to other men's convenience; that our conveniences give way to other men's necessities; and that our necessities give way to other men's extremities." (Quoted by *Bridge*). *Thy poor brother.* Why should I for a little difference in this one particular, of worldly wealth, despise my poor brother? When so many and great things unite us, shall wealth only disunite us? One sun shines on both, one blood bought us both; one heaven will receive us both; only he hath not so much of earth as I, and possibly much more of Christ. And why should I disdain him on earth, whom haply the Lord will advance above me in heaven.—*Bp. Reynolds.*

Ver. 10. *Give him.* There cannot be a more glorious object in creation than a human being, replete with benevolence, meditating in what manner he might render himself most acceptable

to his Creator, by doing most good to His creatures. (*Fielding*.) Nothing is more conformable to God's nature, or renders us more like Him than beneficence.—*Barrow*.

Vers. 16–18. *Not go away*. Servitude seizes on few, but many seize on her.—*Seneca*.

James II., on his death-bed, thus addressed his son, "There is no slavery like sin, and no liberty like God's service." "A good servant," says Luther, "is a real God-send; but truly, it is a rare bird in the land." "If I had served my God as faithfully as my king, He would not have thus forsaken me."

## CHAPTER XVI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—The religious ordinances to be observed in Canaan are continued. Three great festivals are prominently mentioned—Feast of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Former regulations concerning them are presupposed (Ex. xii., Lev. xxiii., Num. xxviii. and xxix.), and attention is drawn to certain additional particulars.

1-8. **The Feast of Passover.** *Abib*, first month of the ecclesiastical year, corresponds with our April (Ex. xii. 2; xiii. 4). **Passover**, prepare, *i.e.*, keep the Passover in its widest sense, including not only the paschal lamb, but sacrifices and offerings during the seven days.

2. **Sacrifice**, *i.e.*, offer sacrifices proper to the feast (Num. xxviii. 19-26).

3. **Affliction**. Israel had to leave in anxious flight and were unable to leaven the dough. This reminds them of oppression and deliverance from it.

4. **Leavened**. A repetition of two points in the observance. No leaven to be seen for the seven days (Ex. xiii. 7); and none of the flesh of the paschal lamb was to be left till the next morning (Ex. xxiii. 18). **Coasts**, borders, districts.

5. **Gates**. The place is fixed. The slaughtering, sacrificing, roasting and eating were to take place at the sanctuary, not as formerly, in different houses.

6. **Thy tents**, not to their homes in the country but their lodgings near the sanctuary. "Other paschal offerings were yet to be offered day by day for seven days, and the people would remain to share them, and especially to take part in the holy convocation on the first and seventh days. The expression, 'unto thy tents,' means simply 'to thy dwellings,' as in 1 Kings viii. 66. The use of 'tents' as a synonym for 'dwellings,' (*cf.* Is. xvi. 5) is a trace of the original nomadic life of the people." (*Speak. Com.*)

9-13. **Feast of weeks**—*Seven weeks*, called feast of weeks, week of weeks (Ex. xxxiv. 22; Lev. xxiii. 10; Acts ii. 1-4). **Begin**, *lit.* "from the beginning of the sickle to the corn"—*i.e.*, from beginning of corn harvest. Corn harvest began by the presentation of the sheaf of first-fruits on the second day of the Passover, which agrees with the time in Lev. xxiii. 15.

10. **Tribute**. A word which is only used here, and signifies sufficiency, need. "Israel was to keep this feast with sacrificial gifts, which everyone was able to bring according to the extent to which the Lord had blessed him, and—

11. To rejoice before the Lord at the place where His name dwelt with sacrificial meals, to which the needy were to be invited (*cf.* xiv. 29), in remembrance of the fact that they also were bondsmen in Egypt." (*Del.*) **Rejoice**, *i.e.*, honour the Lord with sacred songs.

13-15. **Feast of Tabernacles**. This was observed at the end of harvest after the corn had been gathered in. Nothing fresh is added except the appointment of the place and the attendance of domestics, portionless Levites, the stranger, fatherless and widow.

16. Three times a year the males were to attend. "Women were not commanded to undertake the journey, partly from natural weakness of their sex, and partly on account of domestic cares." None must appear *empty*. Gifts must be offered according to God's blessing upon each.

**18-20.** Officers formerly appointed to aid Moses in settlement of disputes were sufficient while they were in the wilderness. In Canaan a different arrangement will be required. *Judges—the Shoterim*, officers (*lit.* writers, see Ex. v. 6) who were associated with the judges, according to chap. i. 15, even under the previous arrangement, were not merely messengers and servants of the courts, but secretaries and advisers of the judges, who derived their title from the fact that they had to draw up and keep the genealogical lists, and who are mentioned as already existing in Egypt as overseers of the people and their work. (*Keil*). *Gates*. The place of public resort and court-house of Eastern cities. No rule is given for the number. They were to be just in their decisions; not to respect persons, nor take gifts. *Grove*, a group of trees, adorned with altars, and dedicated to a particular deity, or a wooden image in a grove (Jud. vi. 25; 2 Kings xxiii. 4-6). These places were strong allurements to idolatry. *Image*. Statue, pillar, or memorial stone dedicated to Baal. See Ex. xxiii. 24; Lev. xxvi. 1; 2 Kings x. 26; Hos. x. 1; Micah v. 12.

### THE PASSOVER.—*Verses 1-8.*

The Passover is one of the most important of all feasts. In its design and circumstances it is most impressive, solemn, and full of instruction to the Christian. Its lessons are repeated in the New Testament and embodied in the great work of the Redeemer.

**I. The feast in its design.** Hearers are supposed to be well informed concerning these ordinances. But “a re-inforcement of this ordinance was the more necessary because its observance had clearly been intermitted for thirty-nine years. One passover only had been kept in the wilderness, that recorded in Num. ix.” (*Speak. Com.*) 1. *To commemorate wonderful deliverance.* For “the Lord thy God brought thee out of Egypt.” Deliverance from bondage, from Pharaoh, cruel task masters, from scenes of horror and ghastly death which no imagination can depict. God is in history, working death for the sinner and life for the believer. “He can create and He destroy.” 2. *To celebrate a new birth.* The deliverance marks a new era in Jewish history. “History herself was born on that night when Moses led forth his countrymen from the land of Goschen,” says Bunsen. Hence the month of its occurrence is the beginning of the sacred year. “This month shall be to you the beginning (the head) of months” (Ex. xii. 1). The day of deliverance was the beginning of national life, and its observance was “the celebration of the day of independence.” Men only begin to live when they are converted to God, and redeemed from sin. Then they are new creatures, one people under Jehovah their King. No longer enslaved, they are led forth to victory, and to a land which God gives for an heritage for ever.

**II. The feast in its circumstances of time and place.** These are specific. 1. *The time.* “In the month Abib,” (Ex. xiii. 4), from March to April in the spring of the year, when barley ripens and nature assumes its beauty, a fit picture of that new life bestowed in redemption, a striking proof of harmony between the works of God and the wonders of grace. God in wisdom connects the celebration of the nation’s birth with the regeneration of nature (Is. xliiii. 1, 15-17). 2. *The place.* “In the place which the Lord shall choose.” The place was chosen and sanctified by God Himself. Formerly they met and partook of sacrifice in their own homes. Now all males had to appear in the sanctuary. They were thus confined to appoint places kept from self-will and foolish devices, and governed by one law of worship. We must ever recognise God in the solemnity of the place where He puts His name. No sacrifice is accepted unless presented on the altar which sacrifices it. 3. *Its duration.* Seven days, and the last, the seventh, was a day of solemn assembly in which no servile work was done. “A holy convocation,” a special season of social intercourse and devotion.



**III. The feast in its typical meaning.** As a sacred memorial to be continually observed, it reminds of many events and sets forth many truths. 1. *It was a type of Christ*—the lamb slain for us, by whose blood we are sprinkled (Heb. xii. 24; 1 Pet. i. 2), and in whom we have redemption. In Him is created a people, a nation of kings and priests to God, to whom belong freedom, holiness, and honour. “Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. v. 7). 2. *It was a symbol of Christian fellowship.* The lamb was not eaten alone, but in families and by companies at first. In later times it was slain at the altar, yet eaten at the table. In the Christian Church we have a fellowship of redeemed souls, bought with a price and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. In Christ we have one faith, one baptism, one hope, and one home. At His table we should keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and cultivate that feeling which is a foretaste of the joys of heaven. “Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

### THE REDEMPTION OF GOD’S PEOPLE.

In the deliverance of Israel from bondage, we have a type of greater deliverance in Christ’s redemption through His blood.

**I. Redemption by great sacrifice.** Egypt lost her firstborn—firstborn of man and beast. What a ghastly scene, death everywhere! What a loss, what a sacrifice for the freedom of the oppressed! “I gave Egypt for thy ransom” (Isa. xliii. 3). But how great the price of our redemption! Paul obtained his Roman privileges “with a great sum” (Acts xxii. 28). Our deliverance cost the life of the Son of God. “Who gave Himself a ransom for all.”

**II. Redemption by great power.** In the great deliverance which made Israel free, God was manifest in every step. 1. *It was timely.* It was a “night” of despair and distress, a night of thick darkness. But God never forgets His promise; times all events and works deliverance in His own way. “When the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes Moses.” “Even the self-same day it came to pass” (Ex. xii. 41). 2. *It was miraculous.* God accomplished what Moses and Aaron could not. They were saved from plagues, from death of the firstborn, from a watery grave and a mighty foe. “Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all. Now shalt thou see what *I will do*” (Ex. v. 23; vi. 1). All enemies must fall and all difficulties vanish before Omnipotence.” “For by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place” (Ex. xiii. 3).

**III. Redemption commemorated.** “Observe the month and keep the Passover.” This has no common event, but a special display of Divine power towards a helpless people. “It was a memorable night—‘a night of observations,’ that night of the Lord” (Ex. xii. 42). God’s mercies in providence and grace should be remembered. 1. Gratefully. 2. Continually. 3. Socially. As long as Jewish polity existed the Passover was to be observed. “Ye shall keep it a feast throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever” (Ex. xii. 14; Lev. xxiii. 4).

**IV. Redemption a motive to consecrated life.** Israel were bought and claimed by God for Himself and no other. “I will redeem you, and I will take you to me for a people.” If we have been delivered from the captivity of Satan, the bondage and corruption of sin, we must live to God. No longer in Egypt, no longer our own, but a new life—a life of righteousness, faith, and obedience in Christ. Life through Christ is a redemptive force, the motive

power, the Divine impulse to a higher destiny. Moral suasion, moral stimulants, moral laws, can never work out moral freedom and beget moral character. "Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

### UNLEAVENED BREAD.

What does this unleavened bread mean? Two things, I think. First, *Christ*; for He is the believer's food. The unleavened bread sets forth Christ in one aspect, as much as the lamb sets Him forth in another. The main portion of the feast was the flesh of the lamb, for which the life of the redeemed was derived. In the Israelite feeding upon unleavened bread, we have presented to us the believer drawing his strength from Jesus, the spotless and holy one—the unleavened bread. "I am the bread of life." But there is another meaning of the unleavened bread, and that is *holiness*, uprightness, singleness of eye. Just as the bread was not the main staple of the passover feast, but the lamb, so holiness is the accompaniment rather than the principal portion of the Christian feast. In the case of every believer the unleavened bread must accompany feeding upon Christ as the lamb. God has joined these two things together, let us not put them asunder. If we are redeemed by the blood of the lamb, let us live upon the unleavened bread; let us show forth the sincerity and truth which God requires in our life. "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 7.)—*From Step. A. Blackwood.*

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *The appointed ordinance.* 1. *Obligatory*, appointed by direct authority of God. "Observe, thou shalt sacrifice." It should always be a privilege, but God makes it a duty to remember providential deliverances. The observance is not optional, a matter of convenience, but a necessity. 2. *Universal*. Offspring reap benefits given to ancestors. Ordinances bind families to each other and to God. 3. *Perpetual* in Jewish Church. Not only in the night of deliverance, but annually in the journeys of the wilderness, and "for ever" in Canaan. Christians will thus celebrate the Lord's supper to the end of time, and in heaven for ever will they praise their Redeemer.

Ver. 2. *Of the flock.* 1. The lamb slain. 2. The blood sprinkled. 3. The flesh eaten. Deliverance possible through it, the Lamb of God. But the blood must be sprinkled and spiritual strength sustained. The pro-

visions of the atonement must be applied to the need of the soul. "By one we enter into the divine covenant, and by the other are made partakers of the divine nature."

Ver. 4. *Unleavened bread.* 1. Affliction. "The bread of affliction." 2. Haste. "For thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste." 3. Purity. No decay, no corruption, the purity of new life. No leaven in heart, home and assembly. "Watch carefully against corruption in life and doctrine, be punctual in your preparation to and participation of the Christian passover."—*Trapp.*

"At the going down of the sun" (ver. 6), between three and six o'clock in the evening. This corresponds with the ninth hour of the great atonement day, when Jesus, the Lamb of God, cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost."

Ver. 8. *A solemn assembly.* Ob-

served personally, publicly and socially. Those who violate the Sabbath and neglect religious ordinances disobey God and endanger the welfare of the nation.

Vers. 1-8. We may learn—1. That there is no service without separation from the world. 2. That separation

from the world is only accomplished by God's help. 3. That the consequences of separation must be sanctification to God. (1) By self surrender. (2) By continual obedience. Or—1. Christian life is of divine origin. 2. Christian life is social in its nature. 3. Christian life is supreme in our conduct.

### THE FEAST OF WEEKS.—*Verses 9-12.*

*Pentecost* signifies *fiftieth*. This feast was held seven weeks (a week of weeks) after the Passover, counting from the second day of that feast. It is called "the feast of harvest" (Ex. xxiii. 16). On this fiftieth day the second festival commenced by the offer of two loaves of fine flour, "which were the first fruits of the wheat harvest" (Lev. xxiii. 17). The feast was to be kept by sacrificial gifts and joy.

**I. A festival of joy.** "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God." 1. *The joy of harvest.* Joy after severe toil and long patience—joy in reaping the results of labour and enjoying the bounty of God—the joy of public thanksgiving. "They joy before thee according to the joy of harvest" (Isa. ix. 3).

Now o'er the corn the sturdy farmer looks,  
And swells with satisfaction to behold  
The plenteous harvest which repays his toil.  
We, too, are gratified, and feel a joy  
Inferior but to his, partakers all  
Of the rich bounty Providence has strew'd  
In plentiful profusion o'er the field.—*Hurdis*.

2. *Joy of social intercourse.* Thou, thy son and daughter, thy domestics, strangers, and fatherless (verse 11). Goodwill and kindness to men were manifested in these festivals. Our joys are increased by letting others share them. "Happiness was born a twin," says Byron. The blessings of God upon us, should create a glad heart, a radiant countenance, and a liberal hand.

**II. An acknowledgement of dependence upon God.** This festival was a national and devout expression of their dependence upon God for the fruits of the earth and the possession of their privileges. The Jew was not permitted to touch his crop until he had presented the first fruits. "This," says a writer, "was a beautiful institution, to teach the Israelites that it was not the soil, nor the raindrops, nor the sunbeams, nor the dews, nor the skill of their agriculturists, that they had to thank for their bounteous produce, but that they must rise above the sower and reaper, and see God, the giver of the golden harvest, and make His praise the key-note to their harvest home."

**III. A memorial of great events.** Two grand events seem to be referred to. 1. *Deliverance from bondage.* "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt." To stimulate gratitude to God and liberality to men. 2. *The giving of the law.* The law was given from Sinai on the fiftieth day from Egypt. These stated celebrations would commemorate and authenticate ancient events. Written records are not always safe; get corrupted or lost, and only impress the few who read them. But general celebrations of a nation's birth and history recall to gratitude and keep alive a conscious dependence upon Divine providence. The exodus of Israel is not a matter of curious antiquity.



but of world interest. The giving of the law and the miracles of early history are revelations of God to man, an evidence that heaven and earth are near to each other in government and purpose.

**IV. A type of Pentecost in the Christian Church.** It was on the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit was poured out and new power bestowed on the Church. As "the first fruits" of the earth were presented of old, so the first fruits from heaven were gathered in by the conversion of three thousand from "every nation under heaven." The thunders of Sinai were hushed by the mighty wind at Jerusalem, and the curse of the Law contrasted by the blessings of the gospel. "The voice of words" is followed by "the tongue of fire."

#### THE TRIBUTE OF FREEWILL.—*Verse 10.*

In the sacrifices there must not only be devout acknowledgement of Divine goodness, but voluntary dedication to God.

**I. Our offerings must be presented with a willing mind.** "A free will offering." The heart must be touched before the gift is taken by "the hand." There must be no hesitation, no constraint. Without this, whatever be the value of the gift, and the splendour of the altar on which it is put, there can be no acceptance." Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7).

**II. Our offerings should be proportionate to God's blessing upon us.** This frees us from all excuse. We can give something. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. viii. 12). Think of God's mercies. 1. *In ordinary affairs.* In our harvests and families, in prosperous trades and professions. In the comforts and privileges of life. What shall we render to God for these? 2. *In special providences.* Many like Israel have special deliverances to commemorate, almost miraculous escapes from danger and death. These should affect our hearts. "Where God sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly." "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee" (verse 17).

**III. Our offerings should be an expression of the subjection of our will to God's will.** If we love God we shall obey Him. Our hearts and gifts will be presented without delay. But if we hate God and forget His mercies, we shall withhold His due. The mind is discovered by its expressions, the willingness measured by the quality of the offering. Gifts full and free indicate gratitude and readiness to please; gifts blemished and stingy prove lack of reverence and submission to God. If we render not according to God's blessing upon us we may lose all we have. "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 10, 11. *Keep the feast.* 1. *In national union.* All the tribes, rich and poor, were to go up to Jerusalem, and there proclaim in united gatherings their dependence upon God. National unity was recognised by worship to a common Redeemer. 2. *In national joy.* They must rejoice in receiving from and giving to God, and in helping one another. (a) *Sacred joy.* "Rejoice

before the Lord thy God." True joy is a serious thing (*Bonar*). Worldly joy is like a shallow brook, deceptive and gliding away. (b) *Social joy*. All within the family and in the gates were to rejoice together. Common mercies should create common joys. 3. *In national beneficence*. Servants, Levites and strangers, the widow and the fatherless, must be remembered. The wants of the needy must be supplied. The law of beneficence then as always must be "as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee."

*Feast of first fruits*. The appointment of these feasts may be considered as—I. *Commemorative*: Of the day on which they came out of Egypt, and of the day on which they

received the law. II. *Typical*: Of the Resurrection, and of the descending of the Spirit on the Apostles. III. *Instructive*: Of our obligations and duty towards God.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

Vers. 9–11. The feast of Pentecost prefigured the mission of the Holy Spirit. *The first fruits of the Spirit* which followed that sacred day on which the law was given, and by which *the spirit of bondage* was introduced, as it also prefigured the first fruits of the new church (Acts ii.), and of the Ministry of the Apostles, and of that new bread with which the Jews first, and then the Gentiles were to be fed.—*Spanheim, Chron. Sac.*

#### THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.—Verses 13–15.

This festival was instituted in grateful commemoration of the security of Israel when dwelling in booths or tabernacles in the wilderness. It began on the 15th day of the month Tisri (from the end of our September and beginning of October), and lasted a week. It was celebrated only at the sanctuary. Offerings were presented on the altar every day and booths were used, on the housetops, in the streets, or in the fields for the dwelling of the people. (Lev. xxiii. 42; Neh. viii. 15, 16.)

**I. A Feast of Ingathering.** "After that thou hast gathered in thy corn and wine." There was no disappointment, no failure in the crops. In these "harvest homes," each season was marked with devout recognition of God's providence. In the Passover the sickle "was put to the corn." In Pentecost the cereal crops were harvested, and now in the Feast of Tabernacles, everything was gathered in, securely stored, and the husbandman rewarded for his toil. "Thou shalt keep the feast of ingathering in the end of the year when thou hast gathered in thy labours." (Ex. xxiii. 16.)

**II. A time of universal joy.** "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast." Gladness was a special characteristic of this autumnal gathering, it was a standing type of festivity, and there was a standing proverb that "He who had never seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water of Siloam (a ceremonial of the Feast of Tabernacles) had never seen rejoicing in his life." The joy was on two accounts. 1. *For the past*. For God's miraculous deliverance and guidance through the wilderness. For the corn, wine and oil, and the produce of the land. What a contrast between the land of promise and the desert draught! 2. *For the future*. God opened up a bright prospect. They were to rejoice in hope and expectation of further blessings. "Because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase," etc. (ver. 15). God's people are commanded and should always be a cheerful people to "rejoice evermore, to rejoice in the Lord always."

**III. A Memorial of Pilgrim Life.** "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of

the land of Egypt" (Lev. xxiii. 43). The people left their homes and abode in "tabernacles." "The feast typifies this our pilgrim state, the life of simple faith in God, for which God provides; poor in this world's goods but rich in God. The church militant dwells as it were in tabernacles; hereafter in hope to be *received into everlasting habitations* in the Church triumphant. It was the link which bound on their deliverance from Egypt to the close of their pilgrim life, and their entrance into rest. The yearly commemoration of it was not only a thanksgiving for God's past mercies, it was a confession also of their present relation to God, that here *we have no continuing city*; that they still needed the guidance and support of God; and that their trust was not in themselves nor in man, but in Him."—*Dr. Pusey.*

**IV. A type of Heaven.** The booths on earth were frail, temporary and easily destroyed. "For a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from the storm and rain" (Is. iv. 6.) But there is "a tabernacle that shall not be taken down." The rest of Canaan typified the rest of heaven, the eternal home of the Christian pilgrim; where there are no tents, no wanderings and no sorrows; no thirst, no pain, no sin, no death. The convocation reminds us of "the general assembly" in the celestial city. In this world we are "strangers and sojourners," let us prepare for the final ingathering of the fruits of God's grace.

#### THE THREE ANNUAL GATHERINGS.—*Verses 16, 17.*

The rules concerning the three feasts are here summed up as in Ex. xxiii. 16, 17; xxxiv. 23. All males must appear. None must appear empty. All must give according to God's blessing upon them. View these gatherings—

**I. In their fixed periods.** There was nothing arbitrary. The seasons corresponded to yearly epochs natural to an agricultural people. There is, something that may worthily bring them together. The energy which slept in the powers of nature, and which gradually developed in the produce of the seasons was the same which was roused in terror to destroy their foes. The god of nature was the moral governor of mankind. "The great fact of a moral government which men are perpetually forgetting, was, in the institutions of one people, linked on to those constantly recurring periods which man's physical wants will not allow him to neglect, and thus challenged their attention, and if anything could, coloured as it were, and inoculated their whole consciousness."

**II. In promoting commercial prosperity.** Facilities for buying and selling for mutual intercourse and trade were great. "Such festivals," says a writer, "have always been attended with this effect. The famous old fair near Hebron arose from the congregating of pilgrims to the famous terebinth-tree of Abraham. The yearly fairs of the Germans are said to have had a similar origin and so the annual pilgrimage of the Mohammedans to Mecca, in spite of many adverse circumstances, has given birth to one of the greatest markets in the Eastern world. Thus, perhaps, more of the wealth of the Jews and of the greatness and glory of Jerusalem is to be traced to the simple laws of this one chapter than to all the wisdom and power of either or all of their kings."

**III. In cementing national unity.** Three times a year did rich and poor meet in one place and on one common ground. Great multitudes would see each other and have opportunity of knowing each other. They would become interested in one another's welfare and a bond of brotherhood would be formed to



counteract schism and rebellion. Union gave firmness and solidity to the nation. One spirit cemented and animated all the tribes. Community of principles, fellowship in festivals and privileges bound all in one compact family. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

**IV. In preserving the religious sentiment.** They were reminded of God in every feast, sacrifice, and offering. Faith, gratitude, love, and all the religious feelings, would be quickened and rightly centred. In their annual worship, God, the one supreme object, was kept before them. In their habitual charity they recognised the claims of the poor. Thus, in its twofold aspects towards God and man, their religion was strengthened to govern individual, social, and national life. Our religion must be the sovereign of the soul, ruling all life and controlling all its activities.

#### HOMEILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 13-15. *National philanthropy.*

1. When God blesses a nation with prosperity He demands its liberality. Wealth, corn and wine are given not for selfish, but for useful purposes. Covetousness plans for selfish ends, benevolence should counter plan and organize resources for objects of divine philanthropy. 2. This liberality should be displayed to the nation's own poor. (a.) In social feasts. "Rejoice in thy feast." (b.) In benevolence to all classes. Those related and those not related (ver. 14). God has identified himself with the orphans and the poor, and delegated them to receive bounty meant for himself (Jas. ii. 5). The poor in our families, churches and nation have the first claim. "Charity begins at home."

Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,  
His country next, and next all human race.

Pope.

Ver. 16. *Three times a year.* The chief objects of the feast. 1. To recount God's mercies. 2. To enhance the piety and patriotism of the people. 3. To promote friendly intercourse among families and sections and thus 4. To aid in preserving the society of the Church and the nation. (*S. S. Journal*). The connection of the feasts with the Life of Jesus. *The Passover.* Jesus and the cross. *The Pentecost.* Jesus and the Holy Spirit. *The Tabernacles.* Jesus and our heavenly home.—*S. S. Journal.*

*Appear before the Lord.* The journey to Jerusalem pictured in "the Songs of Degrees" (Ps. 120-134).

*The twofold aspects of the Feasts.*

1. Looking back to deliverance. 2. Looking forward in hope of entering the "house not made with hands," of being "gathered into the Lord's garner."

Vers. 16, 17. *Not appear empty.* Viewed religiously, the festivals were annual national thanksgivings for mercies received, both natural and miraculous—the first from the commencement of harvest and the deliverance out of Egypt; the second for the completion of the grain harvest and the passage of the Red Sea; the third for the final gathering in of the fruits and the many mercies of the wilderness. At such seasons we must not "appear before God empty," we must give Him not only "the salves of our lips," but some substantial acknowledgment of His goodness towards us. (*Com. for English Readers*).

*Not empty.* 1. An offering to be brought. 2. An offering for each individual. 3. An offering according to the ability of each. 4. An offering to the Lord (a) as an acknowledgment of His mercy, (b) as an expression of gratitude. Gifts are the natural results of gratitude and joy. "Bring an offering and come into His courts" (Ps. cxlv. 8).

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.—*Verses 18-20.*

These words with the four next chapters give certain directions for the administration of justice. While Moses lived, he himself specially taught of God, was sufficient. But the people were soon to be scattered in the land and would no longer be encamped together, hence regular and permanent provision must be made for future order in civil and social government.

**I. Right men must be chosen.** The nation must select its own judges and officers, secretaries and advisers of judges, and every place was now to have its own administration. Imperfect sinful men were to be entrusted with solemn duty, to represent God and train up a nation in righteousness and truth.

**II. These men must judge with impartial spirit.** God seeks to implant right principles and cultivate right dispositions in men. Good laws must be rightly administered. Corruption and tyranny must disgrace no community, ruler, or subject. 1. *No injustice.* "They shall judge the people with just judgment." 2. *No perversion of judgment.* "Thou shalt not wrest judgment" (verse 19) in social, civil, or religious matters. 3. *No partiality.* "Thou shalt not respect persons," rich or poor. "Hear the small as well as the great, be not afraid of the face of man for the judgment is God's" (Deut. i. 16, 17). 4. *No bribery.* "Neither take a gift." Pure justice was not often administered. Corruption was prevalent in Hebrew, as well as Oriental judges, was one of the crying evils which provoked God's anger against his people and led first to the Babylonian captivity, and afterwards to the Roman conquest. 5. *Nothing but right.* "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow," literally *justice, justice*; "the repetition for the sake of emphasis and solemnity. God is just, and at the great day will give to everyone his due. He should therefore rule and stay in fear of Him." "Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chr. xix. 5-7).

"Mercy more becomes a magistrate  
Than the vindictive wrath which men call justice!"—*Longfellow.*

**III. The blessings which follow justice rightly administered.** Right performance of duty always brings pleasure and reward. 1. *Life is relieved.* Evils are prevalent enough, without increasing them by official injustice. The purpose of government is to remove unjust burdens, to encourage progress, and reconcile all classes. "Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants" says Burke. "That thou mayest live." 2. *Inheritance is secured.* Strife and enmity, robbery and injustice, create disorder and endanger life and property. Righteous laws duly administered bring peace to the city, give security to the throne, and stability to the state. "Inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." 3. *Society is improved.* When vice is unchecked and virtue neglected, when judgment is perverted and authority set at naught, there can be no improvement and progress in society. Wealth does not christianise, change does not ameliorate society. Laws must command good and forbid evil, punish transgression and reward obedience. "The function of a government," says Gladstone, "is to make it easy for people to do good, and difficult for them to do evil." "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil" (Rom. xiii. 3).

IDOLATRY FORBIDDEN.—*Verses 21, 22.*

In giving practical directions for the administration of justice, Moses begins by denouncing idolatry, which is rebellion against supreme power. They are neither to plant groves, nor set up pillars in the worship of God.

**I. Idolatry is enticing.** This on many accounts. 1. By its *prevalence*. In some form or other it is the most popular religion in the world. Men bow down to the idols of luxury, ambition, pleasure and avarice. "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god" (Mic. iv. 5). 2. By its *use*. We naturally forsake God and cling to sin. Evil inclination leads to wrong choice, and men chose darkness rather than light.

**II. Idolatry is treason against God.** God is the sum of all moral qualities, the proprietor of all resources, and the giver of all existences. What more rational than to worship Him? We are bound, *obligated* to love Him. Nothing belies God, nor degrades man like the worship of images and statues. This is treason against heaven, the firstborn of all folly, the total of all absurdities. "An idol is nothing."

**III. Idolatry must be utterly forsaken.** We must neither join the worshippers nor sanction the worship. Plant no grove of trees, for truth loves light and reproves dark. Set up no image by hands or in imagination. We must not enquire for idols, transfer our affections to them, nor address our prayers to them. God's people are forbidden to examine or look at them. "Turn ye not (face not) unto idols, nor make to yourselves molton gods. I am the Lord your God." (Lev. xix. 4.)

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 18–20. *Judges and Justice.*

1. The supremacy of justice and right outweighed all personal considerations, all private pleasures and friendships. Right must be upheld and honoured. 2. The method of upholding justice. By imperfect men, chosen by the people, acting with impartial spirit and representing God. "Ye shall be as gods." 3. The places in which justice was upheld. "In all thy gates." The places of public resort where courts were held and business transacted. The Ottoman Porte derives its name (*Porta*) from this custom of administration. The word here means in every

city and town. Amid the homes and daily affairs of men right and authority must be obeyed. Earthly courts must be a type of heavenly; human tribunals remind us of the power and jurisdiction of Him against whom "the gates of hell shall not prevail."

Vers. 21–22. *Idolatry.* 1. Its various forms. Idolatry previously forbidden; but law repeated against particular forms and places. 2. The people's proneness to it. 3. The divine prohibition. No intermixture of worship, no tampering with danger. Entire avoidance.

## ILLUSTRATIONS ON CHAPTER. XVI.

Vers. 1–4. *Remember.* A good memory is the best monument. Others are subject to casualty or time; and we know that the pyramids themselves,

doting with age, have forgotten the names of their founders.—*Fuller*. The memory of past labours is very sweet.—*Cicero*.



Vers. 4-8. *The place.* Public worship is the nearest resemblance of heaven.—*Clarkson.*

Vers. 11-14. If men lived like men their houses would be temples — temples which we should hardly dare to inquire, and in which it would make us holy to be permitted to live (*Ruskin*).—*Joy.*

All who joy would win  
Must share it—Happiness was born a twin.  
*Byron.*

Vers. 9, 13, 16. *Feasts.* Festivals, when duly observed, attach men to the civil and religious institutions of their country: it is an evil therefore when they fall into disuse. For the same reason the loss of local observances is to be regretted: who is there that does not remember their effect upon himself in early life. (*Southey*.) Those are the rarest feasts which are graced with the most royal guests.—*W. Secker.*

Vers. 18-20. *Judge.* Sir Mt. Hale was very exact and impartial in the administration of justice. He would never receive any private addresses or recommendation from the highest persons. One of the first peers of England once called upon him

privately, to acquaint him with a suit in law to be tried before him, that he might better understand it in open court. Sir Mt. stopped him and told him that he never received information of causes, but where both parties might be heard alike. The nobleman went away, complained to the king and declared it a rudeness that could not be endured. His Majesty bade him to content himself that he was no worse used, and said "He verily believed he would have used himself no better if he had gone to solicit him in any of his own causes."—*Buck.*

Vers. 21-22. *Image.* Idolatry has its origin in the human heart. Men love sin and do not want to be reprov'd for it; therefore they form themselves a god that will not reprove them. (*J. H. Evans.*) All the princes of the earth have not had so many subjects betrayed and made traitors by their enemies as God hath lost souls by the means of images. Christ saith not, "Go preach unto the people by images," but "Go into all the world and preach the gospel."—*Bp. Hooper.*

"Yet man, this glorious creature, can debase  
His spirit down to worship wood and stone,  
And hold the very beasts which bear his yoke,  
And tremble at his eye for sacred things."

*London,*

## CHAPTER XVII.

CRITICAL REMARKS.—Israel not only had tendency to idolatry, but inclination to offer animals with faults and to transgress the laws of worship. *Blemishes* named in Lev. xxii.

Vers. 2-7. *Idolaters slain.* Done *wickedness, lit. the wickedness*, the special sin denounced. Facts were to be enquired into, the charge substantiated. *Two witnesses* were needful (Num. xxv. 30) to condemn. *Thy gates*, where judicial proceedings took place (*cf.* Neh. viii 1-3; Job xxix. 7). "The sentence executed outside the town, as it had been outside the camp in the wilderness (Lev. xxiv. 14; Num. xv. 36), to indicate the exclusion of the criminal from the congregation, and from fellowship with God"—*put away, lit. consume, set fire to, destroy by burning; hence to root out, remove, annihilate.*

Vers. 8-13. *The Higher Judicial Court at the Sanctuary.* *Too hard.* Ver. 8. The transition is obvious for enactments of capital crimes to obscure and difficult cases; cases like that brought before Moses (Ex. xviii. 23-27). "In future judges of the different towns were to bring all cases which they were unable to decide, before the priests, the Levites and the judge that shall be in those days." Ver. 9. "The judge would no doubt be a layman, and thus the court would contain both an ecclesiastical and civil element." (*Speak. Com.*) Ver. 10. This superior court was not a court of appeal to adjudicate on verdicts given by another court. Its decisions were final and

authoritative ; founded on law—the suitors must obey them as the voice of Jehovah. Ver. 12. *Do presumptuously.* If a person was refractory and disobedient he would be put to death as a rebel against God.

Vers. 14-20. **The choice and duties of a king.** The choice of a king is not like that of judges and officers (xvi.), enjoined, but simply permitted. The reason is obvious. Provision for due administration of justice is essential ; that justice should be dispensed through monarchical forms is not so ; and is accordingly only recognised as an arrangement, which might probably result on the settlement and consolidation of the people in Canaan. (*Speak. Com.*)

Vers. 16-20. **Three rules given for the guidance of the king.** He was not to keep *many horses*, and thus lead back the people to Egypt, from which God had delivered them. He must trust in God, not in warlike preparations. Ver. 17. Nor to have *many wives*, lest his heart should be turned from God. Lastly, he must not accumulate a vast treasure, by engaging in foreign commerce. Solomon transgressed this rule (2 Chron. i. 15), and was imitated by Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 2). Ver. 18. Instead of minding earthly things he must meditate in the *law* ; copy it himself or have a copy written for him ; daily consult it, to keep him from pride and error ; to prolong his own life and secure the crown to his posterity.

### BLEMISHED SACRIFICES.—*Verse 1.*

Sacrifices are of divine origin, and God alone can specify what kind will be acceptable to him. Animals perfect and uninjured were always to be offered (Ex. xii. 5 ; Lev. i. 3).

**I. God requires perfect sacrifices.** “No blemish.” There must be no flaw in character, obedience, and life. No hypocrisy in worship and profession. Nothing ill-favoured and unsightly. Our sacrifices must befit the sacred purpose for which they are offered, and be the symbol of the moral integrity of those who offer them. “Whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer : for it shall not be acceptable for you.”

**II. Men offer imperfect sacrifices.** Many things are withheld which God demands, and things which are offered are lame and blind. They are blemished, defective in spirit and measure. We keep back part of our time and the best of our service. They are tainted with worldly influence, half-heartedness, selfishness, and reluctance. “Should I accept this at your hand ?”

**III. How then can our sacrifices be acceptable to God?** Not through our merits, but “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” In ancient time animals were not accepted so much on account of their perfect, physical organisation, or intrinsic excellence, as their typical value. They were selected and offered on behalf of the guilty. When offered in penitence and faith they were received. If we come in rectitude of heart, God will pardon and bless. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God ?”

### THE DETECTION AND PUNISHMENT OF GUILT.—*Verses 2-7.*

The duties of magistrates are again enjoined, and special forms legalised to detect and punish idolators.

**I. The detection of guilt.** Actions speak louder than words. If a man or woman served other gods it would be known and talked about. But crime was discovered. 1. *Not by mere report.* “It be told thee.” Reports do mischief, and must be sifted before circulated. They were not to act on hearsay, or under prejudice and excitement. 2. *Honest enquiry was made.*

"Inquired diligently." Flying rumours were judicially examined. Diligent search might substantiate the report. If not, a salutary dread would impress the people. 3. *The offence proved by competent witnesses.* Not by the testimony of one, but of two or three witnesses was the guilty punished (verse 6). This was a safeguard against a hasty and unjust verdict. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Cor. xiii. 1).

**II. The punishment of the guilty.** "He that is worthy of death be put to death" (verse 6). 1. *The witnesses must lead* (verse 7). This would check false witness, and ensure truthfulness and sincerity. It would be a public avowal of their testimony, and a proof that the sin had met its due punishment. 2. *The punishment was inflicted openly.* "At the gates." Condemned criminals were executed outside the walls, and thus put to greater shame as a warning to others. This was a type of the rejection of Jesus, who suffered without the camp, and bore our reproach (Heb. xiii. 12.) 3. *All the people took part.* The hands of the witness first, and then the people (verse 7). All are interested in checking crime, and all must be purified when it is detected. God will have no rival. Idolatry of every degree and description is a capital crime, and death is decreed as its penalty. We must detest it, uproot it in our hearts and customs. "So thou shalt put the evil away from among you."

### IDOLATRY, A GRIEVOUS SIN.

**I. It is offensive to God.** "The wickedness in the sight of the Lord." 1. *A violation of His covenant.* "In transgressing His covenant" (verse 2). Concealed or open, cultured or gross in form, it robbed God of His due. "It was spiritual adultery which breaks the marriage bond," says Henry. It rendered void the covenant, and therefore forfeited all its blessings. 2. *A defeating of His purpose.* Israel was chosen to be a holy people and to preserve purity of worship, but idolatry defeated this object.

**II. It is injurious to society.** "Abomination wrought in Israel" (verse 4). It extinguishes the light and impairs the moral sensibilities of the nation. It breaks the moral bonds and creates debasing habits in society. It is the spring of posset immorality. An act of treason and rebellion against the majesty of Heaven.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 4, 5. Precautions in search of the truth. *Told thee privately*, and in confidence; *thou hast heard* of it, therefore notorious, a public scandal and likely to be true; *enquired diligently*, sought to find out the truth, by careful examination of persons and circumstances: *behold it is true*, not founded on vague rumour or malice; *the thing certain*, proved by the clearest evidence; *then bring forth the man*," etc. (verse 5). The charge of idolatry was the most solemn and awful that could be brought against an Israelite, because it affected his life; therefore,

God required that the charge should be *substantiated* by most unequivocal facts, and most competent witnesses. Hence all the precautions mentioned must be carefully used, to arrive at so affecting, and so awful a truth.—(*Ad. Clarke.*)

*The Sacredness of Human Life.*  
1. A man thought innocent until proved guilty. 2. A fair trial to establish the guilt. 3. The method of punishing guilt a wise procedure. (a) Interesting the people in its detection and punishment. (b) Secur-



ing moral certainty in truthful verdict.  
(c) Economy in judicial administration.

*Witnesses inflicting punishment.*

1. To deter from rash accusation. 2. To check the evil thus punished. "A rule which would naturally lead to the supposition that no man would come forward as a witness without the fullest certainty or the greatest depravity." (*Keil*). He assigned this part to the witnesses, chiefly because there are so

many whose tongue is so slippery, not to say good for nothing, that they would boldly strangle a man with their words, when they would not dare to touch him with one of their fingers. It was the best remedy, therefore, that could be tried for restraining such levity, to refuse to admit the testimony of any man who was not ready to execute judgment with his own hand. —(*Calvin*.)

DECISION OF CONTROVERSIES.—*Verses 8-13.*

In all evil and criminal cases where doubts and difficulties were involved, local magistrates were to submit them to the supreme council for final decision. From this decision there must be no swerving right or left.

**I. Human interests often perplex.** "A matter too hard for thee in judgment." Cases were often complicated and obscure, too hard for inferior judges to decide. 1. *They spring up in small circles*, "within thy gates" (ver. 8). In towns and villages difficult questions have to be considered—poor laws, sanitary measures, and bitter cries in many forms. Often the smaller the circle the more perplexing the problem. 2. *They relate to civil matters.* Cases of murder or death, accidentally or wilfully, "between blood and blood" contending parties in law suits, "between plea and plea." Actions of assault or bodily injury, "between stroke and stroke." Society is not perfect. Men are selfish, cruel and disobedient. The wisest rules are often unable to solve the controversy within the gates. "That which is crooked cannot be made straight."

**II. The court of appeal to settle these interests.** Courts of judgment were in every city (xvi. 18), empowered to determine cases of the crown and of the people. 1. *Composed of appointed officers.* "Thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites, and unto the judge. Representatives of God in every department of life must be expounders of law and examples of justice. 2. *Assembled in one place.* "Get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose" (ver. 8). The sittings were held near the sanctuary, that in great emergencies the high priest might consult the Urim (Num. xxvii. 21). The house of God is the place of righteousness and the seat of learning. We must come not only to meditate and praise, but to "enquire" from His servants and word. "Ask now the priests concerning the law."

**III. The importance of the decision given by this court.** This was the highest judicial authority and its decisions were most important. 1. *They were legally right.* "They shall show thee the sentence of judgment" (ver. 9). In harmony with the will of God and the interests of the suitors. Not the result of worldly wisdom but of divine teaching. 2. *They were binding in authority.* No appeal from this judgment. It was the law of God, not the enactment of men. a. *Obedience was enforced.* "Thou shalt do." We must receive the truth, not as the word of man, but the word of God. b. *Disobedience was punished.* The man that would not hearken but acted presumptuously must die. Resistance was rebellion, which was severely rebuked, condemned and punished. It was "striving with the priest" (Hos. iv. 4) and contending with

God. "What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" 3. *They were benevolent in their aim.* "That the people might hear and fear and do no more presumptuously" (ver. 13). To check evil, keep humble, and promote order and righteousness. "For the punishment of evil doers and the praise of them that do well."

### SOCIETY'S WELFARE PROMOTED.

Mankind are associated together for something more than to eat, sleep, and secure protection. They co-exist for mutual intercourse, mutual help and the advancement of present and eternal good. This is accomplished—

**I. By legal tribunals.** Since society is not human in its origin, conventional in its principals, and accidental in its destination, its institutions must harmonise with its character and aim. Government is needful to its existence and welfare. Courts of justice are tribunals to defend right, truth, and liberty. God who lays upon mankind the necessity of appointing rulers, has laid upon rulers the necessity of rewarding good and punishing evil. Resistance tends to weaken government and create disorder. "Let every good soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained (ordered) of God."

**II. By the co-operation of all its functions.** We have different classes, different ranks and various interests among men. But in political, ecclesiastical and civil matters, the good of the whole should be consulted. Priests and ministers of religion may enlighten the public conscience and expound the law. Judges and magistrates may administer that law "for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well." There should be no invasion of rights and no alienation of ranks; no miscarriage of justice and no schism in the body." There are many departments with one interest and end; "diversities of operation with the same spirit."

Heaven forming each on other to depend  
A master, or a servant, or a friend,  
Bids each on other for assistance call,  
Till one man's weakness grows the strength of all.

**III. By upholding the authority of God's Word.** "The law" must be honoured and upheld. This is the only guarantee of order, prosperity and morality. It should be the ruling principle of kings, parliaments, and people. It should regulate the counsels of statesmen and the maxims of lawyers; reign in the country and the colonies, in the cottage and the court. This is the sweet ground on which a nation's prosperity can rest and rise to the highest pitch. Institutions and enterprises, thrones and empires that disregard the word of God will fall, and great will be their fall. When the law of God is exalted "there will be security of thy times, riches of salvation, of wisdom and knowledge. Fear of Jehovah is then the treasure of Judah" (Isa. xxxiii. 6).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 8-13. There is a misconception of this passage. The argument built upon it by the most able Romish controversialists is, that here plainly the Bible is not enough; that you are

to go to a judge, the priest to get his opinion and his decision, and if you will not accept it, that then you are to be anathematized and expelled. But just mark a few distinctions overlooked

in such a statement. *First*, it is not to hear a controversy about doctrine, but a controversy about blood, and plea, and stroke,—civil matters. *Secondly*, when there is a controversy, it is not the high priest that is to decide it; but it is the priest or the Levite—a layman—or the judge—a layman also. Therefore if they will quote this passage as a precedent for Papal infallibility, deciding doctrinal discussions and expelling them that will not submit to it, they ought to quote fully; and if they quote fully, they will see it is not controversy about doctrine, but about civil matters; and next, that the controversy is to be appealed not to an ecclesiastic

only, but to a layman as well.—(*Dr. Cumming.*)

Vers. 9, 10.—Duties of priests to expound the law, of judges to administer it, and of the people to ascertain it. "The law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet."

Vers. 12, 13. *Presumptuous sins.* 1. Resistance to priests when dissatisfied with interpretation of law. 2. Resistance to judges when discontented with sentence or decisions given. Such refractory conduct worthy of death. "Presumptuous are they and self-willed." "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin."

### THE CHOICE AND DUTY OF A KING.—Verses 14–20.

If Israel should wish for a king when they possessed the land, God gave permission to choose one under His direction. "The appointment of a king is not *commanded*, like the institution of judges (chap. xvi. 18), because Israel could exist under the government of Jehovah without an earthly king; it is simply *permitted*, in case the need should arise for a regal government." (*Keil.*)

**I. The choice of a king.** Moses foresaw the nation's wish to have a king, and is taught to legislate for his choice and conduct (*cf.* 1 Sam. viii. 10–12). 1. *According to Divine arrangement.* "Set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose." The people might select, but subject somehow to Divine approval. Kings are God's vice-regents, and He nominates when nations elect them. God's will should direct and determine our choice. The people are reprov'd for acting in forgetfulness. "They have set up kings, but not by me" (Hos. viii. 4). 2. *Not from a strange nation.* "Not a stranger over thee which is not thy brother." Kings must own their kinship to the people and act as brothers, not as Eastern despots nor royal castes. A gentile head for a Jewish nation would be strange, might defeat the end in view in separating that nation from others, and introduce strange customs and foreign alliances.

**II. The duties of the king.** These are specified. 1. *Negatively.* (a) He is not to depend upon horses. "Not multiply horses" (verse 16). His trust must not be in "horses and chariots" and warlike preparations, but in the living God. Egypt furnished Canaan with horses (1 Kings x. 28, 29), and they might be endangered by alliance, and tainted by idolatry. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses" etc. (Is. xxxi. 1). (b) Not to be seduced by many wives. "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself." No harem must be kept to gratify the love of pleasure. His heart must not be turned away from business and works of piety. "When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods" (1 Kings xi. 1–4). (c) Not to accumulate riches. "Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." Desire for wealth might lead to oppression and injustice. Riches produce pride, and we are not "to trust in uncertain riches." 2. *Positively.* (a) He must copy the law, or some qualified scribe must copy it for him. This would inure himself to labour and study, enlighten and impress his mind. The Word of God must not only be written on parchment, but imprinted on



the mind and heart. (b) He must read it when copied. "He shall read therein." It is not enough to have the Bible in the cabinet, or in the drawer; we must read it. Read it daily, read it all through life as our guide and companion. Alexander valued Homer most highly and Scipio Africanus would scarcely allow Xenophon's Cyclopædia to be put out of sight. The king of Israel was to study God's word, and meditate therein day and night.

### EARTHLY KINGS UNDER THE POWER OF THE HEAVENLY KING.

**I. In the method of their election.** None chosen without God's permission, or if chosen, elected without His providence. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will" (Dan. iv. 32; v. 21).

**II. In the laws by which they govern.** Good laws are made by good men, and good men are the gift of God. Bad laws are often overruled for the good of men. "Of law," says Hooker, "these can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God—her voice the harmony of the world."

**III. In the duration of their reign—**God can lengthen or shorten their days. He puts down one and sets up another. "He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings and setteth up kings" (Dan. ii. 21).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 14. *Anticipated provisions.* Regal government not enjoined, almost discountenanced and forbidden, but future provision made and rules of conduct given. So in Christian history and Christian life.

Ver. 16. *Horses.* As horses appear to have been generally furnished by Egypt, God prohibits these. 1. Lest these should be such commerce with Egypt as might lead to idolatry. 2. Lest the people might depend upon a well appointed *cavalry* as a means of security and so cease trusting in the strength and protection of God. And 3. That they might not be tempted to extend their *dominion* by means of cavalry and so get scattered among the surrounding idolatrous nations, and thus cease in process of time to be that distinct and separate people which God intended they should be; and without which the prophecies relative to the Messiah, could not be known to have the due and full accomplishment.—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 18. *Write a copy.* 1. A standard of reference. Probably an

autograph kept in the tabernacle by the priests. 2. A preventative from error. Possibly every copy was revised by priests and compared to the original. 3. A provision for the future. Former copies would bear out, but new ones were to be made. Thus the Word of God has been handed down from age to age.

Vers. 18, 19. Observe on this passage—1. That it was the surest way to bring the Israelitish king to an acquaintance with the divine law, to oblige him to write out a fair copy of it with his own hand. 2. He has to read this law diligently and constantly; neither the greatness of his place nor the height and multitude of his business must excuse or hinder him. 3. It is not enough to have Bibles, but we must use them; yea, use them daily. Our souls must have constant meals of that manna, which, if well digested, will afford them true nourishment and strength.—*J. Wilson.* The king, even the king, was not to employ an amanuensis, but was himself to write out a copy of the law. Evidently the reason was, what you read rapidly

you forget rapidly, but if you sit down and write, and that carefully and in the best handwriting that you can, texts from the Bible, you will recollect them much more easily. And no doubt the object of making the king write it out for himself was that it might be impressed upon his mind and heart the more.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Vers. 19, 20. Proper reading of Scripture will beget—1. A right state of mind. “That his heart be not lifted up.” Deep humility becomes all students. 2. Reverence for Divine authority. The fear of God and regard for His statutes. 3. Conscientious obedience to Divine law—“To do them,” or daily reading of the law. (1) To learn to fear God. (2) To be kept from pride. (3) To prevent apostasy, and (4) to secure the possession of the throne. Elevation begets pride and pride independence. Charles the Great set the crown upon the Bible. The Bible is the best support of the crown and kingdom.

*With him.* As his *vade mecum*, his manual, his running library, the man of his counsel. Luther said he would not live in Paradise without the Bible,

as with it he could easily live in hell itself.—*Trapp.*

*That his heart be not lifted up.* Observe—1. It is here intimated that the Scriptures diligently read are a powerful means to keep a person humble, because they show that, though a king, he is subject to a higher monarch, to whom he must give an account of all his administrations, and receive from him his sentence agreeably to their quality, which is sufficient to abate the haughtiest person in the world. 2. That the greatest monarch may receive more benefit by the Scriptures than by all the wealth and power of his monarchy. An attentive, prayerful, believing perusal of the Bible will be of advantage. (1) To His person. “He shall prolong his days in his kingdom. We find in the history of the kings of Judah, that generally the best reigns were the longest, except when God shortened them for the punishment of the people, as Josiah’s. (2) To his family; his children shall also prosper. Entail religion upon posterity and God will entail a blessing upon it.”—*J. Wilson.*

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1. *Blemish.* Remember that God will not be mocked; that it is the heart of the worshipper which he regards. We are never safe till we love Him with our whole heart whom we pretend to worship.—*Bp. Henshawe.*

Vers. 2-7. There is but one true God, who made heaven and earth, and sea and winds; but the folly and madness of mankind brought in *images* as representatives of God (Rom. i. 22, 23). “All the princes of the earth hath not had so many subjects betrayed and made traitors by their enemies as God hath lost souls by the means of idolatry and images.—*Bp. Hooker.*

*Enquire diligently,* ver. 4.

“Believe not each accusing tongue,  
As most weak persons do;  
But still believe that story wrong  
Which ought not to be true.”—

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*Sheridan.*

Vers. 8-13. *Too hard.* The greatest difficulties lie where we are not looking for them.—(*Goethe.*) *Controversy,* ver. 8. Many controversies grow up about religion, as suckers from the root and limbs of a fruit tree, which spend the vital sap that should make it fruitful.—(*Flavel.*) *Sentence of judgment,* ver. 9. The main strength and force of a law consists in the penalty annexed to it.—*Blackstone.*

“Sovereign law, that states collected will  
O’er thrones and globes elate,  
Sits empress, crowning good, repressing ill.  
*Sir W. Jones.*

Vers. 14, 15. *King over thee.* Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants. (*Burke.*) *Horses.* For stateliness and majesty what is comparable to a horse? —*Sir T. More.*

Vers. 18-20. *A book.* Bishop Hooker, in a dedication to king Edward VI., remarked, "God in heaven, and the king on earth, hath not a greater friend than the Bible." "The Bible is the foundation of all good government, as it instructs rulers and subjects in their respective duties. A French lady once said to Lord Chesterfield that she thought the Parliament of England consisted of five or six hundred of the best informed and most sensible

men in the kingdom. 'True, madam, they are generally supposed to be so.' 'What then, my lord, can be the reason that they tolerate so great an absurdity as the Christian religion?' 'I suppose, madam,' replied his lordship, 'it is because they have not been able to substitute anything better in its stead; when they can, I do not doubt but in their wisdom they will readily adopt it.'—*Whitecross.*

## CHAPTER XVIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—After speaking of the rulers of the people, Moses now mentions the teachers priests, Levites, and prophets; and what their privileges and position must be in their settlement in Canaan.

Vers. 3-5. *Rights of priests.* The tribe of Levi had no inheritance like other tribes (Num. 18-20); wholly consecrated to the priestly office, they were supported by tithes, first-fruits, and portions of sacrifices, which God had expressly reserved to Himself, yet when offered bestowed upon His servants. *Priest's due*, the shoulder, two cheeks, and the maw, *i.e.*, the front leg. The two jaw bones, and the rough stomach of ruminants in which digestion is completed, and which was considered a great dainty (ver. 3). *First-fruits*, the law repeated from Num. xviii. 12, 13, for the purpose of adding "the first of the fleece of thy sheep" (ver. 4). *Him and his sons.* Reference to Aaron and his sons, in whom the priesthood was established (ver. 5).

Vers. 6-8. *The Levites, i.e.*, the non-priestly Levites contrasted with the priests must be remembered. "These verses presuppose that part of the Levites only will be in residence and officiating at the sanctuary, the others dwelling in their homes in the Levitical cities (*cf.* Num. xxxv). But if any Levite, out of love for the service, chose to resort to it when he might reside in his own home, he was to have his share in the maintainance which was provided for those ministering in the order of their cause."—(*Speak. Com.*) *Sojourned*, though not homeless. He was regarded as a sojourner only, for he had no inheritance in the land. *Minister assistant* to the priest (Num. iii. 6). *Patrimony, lit.* his price upon (the house) of (his) fathers. *Margin*, his sales by the fathers. The Levites had no part in the land, but they might individually have property, buy and sell houses and fields. Abiathar (1 Kings ii. 26; Jeremiah xxxii. 7). A Levite who desired to settle at the sanctuary, must have his share of the perquisites, notwithstanding private resources. *Have like portions, lit.*, "part like part shall they eat." The new comer and those already in attendance must share and share alike.

Vers. 9-14. Passing on to speak of the prophets, the legislator begins by enumerating and prohibiting the various superstitions by which heathen nations of Canaan had sought to explore the future and to test the will of the Deity.—(*Sp. Com.*) *Through fire, i.e.*, to Molech, (*cf.* Lev. xviii. 21; xx, 2-5), a rite of doubtful character, but connected with magical arts, and probably with unlawful lusts (2 Kings xviii. 17; 2 Chr. xxxiii. 6; Ezek. xxiii. 37). *Divination* (*cf.* Ezek. xxi. 21) for different methods of it, and (Num. xxiii. 23) *observance of times*, mode of dividing days into lucky and unlucky, or of drawing omens from clouds (Lev. xix. 26). *Enchanter*, serpent charmer. *Witch*, sorcerer (Ex. vii. 11). *Charmer* (ver. 11), one who fascinates noxious animals, like Eastern serpent-charmers. The word is derived from a root to bind, referring to the custom of binding or banning by magical knots. *Wizard*, originally "the wise one," "the knowing one," from a verb to know. *Necromancer*, one who interrogates the dead (2 Chr. xxxiii. 6). Thus all known words are grouped together, which belong to the practices described—*perfect*, upright, sincere or blameless (Latin *integer*) in relation to God. *For thee* emphatic, not so thou, God never allowed (Heb. *given*), granted thee to do such things.

Vers. 15-22. No need for Israel to turn to soothsayers; God would raise up from amongst them a prophet time after time, a series of prophets. *Like me*, not in every sense, but as intercessor for the people and revealer of God's will. *Assembly* (ver. xvi. 16 *cf.* cp. 9, 10, and



Ex. xx. 19). To this prophet who should speak words received directly from God, reverence and obedience must be rendered. *Require it* (ver. 19), *i.e.*, visit disobedience with punishment (cf. Ps. x. 13; Acts iii. 23). The prophet who presumed to speak in God's name, or utter words not given him, must be regarded as a blasphemers and put to death (ver 20). If his prophecy failed, or if his words did not come to pass, he was discovered to be an imposter. Whatever signs and wonders were performed, fulfilment of prediction was the true test of prophecy (cf. cp. 12, 2 sq.).

### THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF PRIESTS.—*Verses 1-5.*

From the limitations of monarchy, Moses turns to the duties of the priests and specifies their inheritance and dues.

**I. The dignity of priests.** They were a special tribe called to minister in the name of the Lord (ver 5). 1. *Chosen of God.* "Thy God hath chosen him." This is an honour which no man taketh upon himself (Heb. v. 5), not hereditary, nor conferred by men, and which should not be despised. "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you . . . to bring you nearer to Himself" (Num. xvi. 9). 2. *Consecrated to holy service.* "To minister in the name of the Lord." He was not engaged in secular callings, nor employed in the service of an earthly monarch, but in the service, by the authority and for the praise of God. A sense of this dignity should be carefully formed, and constantly realised. Dignity of character should correspond with dignity of station. Ministers should "magnify" (glorify) their "office" (Rom. xi. 13) by a due appreciation of its nature, an earnest endeavour to live up to its demands, and a fearless discharge of its duties.

**II. The due of priests.** Deprived of land and specially set apart for spiritual functions, they had special reverences. 1. *They required the sympathy of the people.* The order preceded from the midst of the people (Ex. xxviii 1), was appointed for the benefit of the people and depended upon the people. They were not a sacred caste, standing in proud pre-eminence above the rest of the nation. A principle of equality was indicated in priesthood and monarchy. "Taken from among men." 2. *They required the support of the people.* To reward their labour, performed instead of the first-born of the people, and to compensate their loss of material wealth, it was ordained that they should receive tithes of produce and parts of animal sacrifices. The Levite, as well as the widow and orphan, was commended to the special kindness of the people (Deut. xiv. 27-29; xii. 19). "He commanded the people to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord" (2 Chron. xxxi. 4).

**III. The inheritance of priests.** They had cities and residence that they might exercise a refined influence upon the people, and disseminate a knowledge of the law, but no territorial possessions. "The Lord is their inheritance" (verse 2). Theirs by adopting love, personal preference, and public avowal. An inheritance blessed, satisfactory, secure, and permanent. "I am their inheritance and ye shall give them no possession in Israel" (Ezek. xlv. 28).

### THE MINISTRATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE PRIESTS.—*Verses 1-8.*

The words may be applied to the Christian ministry, though not a priesthood in the Old Testament sense. The sacred office is filled with men divinely called and qualified, entrusted with the most responsible and enriching blessing, and rendering the greatest service to their fellow men.

**I. The calling of a priest is one of the highest into which a man can enter.** It eclipses earthly callings as the sun outshines the stars. 1. *An office divinely instituted.* Not left to the wisdom and device of men. "The ministry is a matter of free grace and favour," says Quesnel, "who then will dare to enter into it without a Divine call? There is nothing in which a king would willingly be more absolute than in the choice of his ministers, and shall we dare to contest, and take away this right from the King of Kings." "Ordained of God as was Aaron." 2. *An office spiritual in its nature.* Levites were forbidden to become farmers and enter into commercial pursuits. They were devoted to the service of God and the ministration of His house. The work is not an ordinary profession, conducted on the principles of commercial transactions. Ministers "must give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word." 3. *An office perpetual in its duration.* "Him and his sons for ever." Aaron died but successors entered the office. Human life is uncertain; we must not trust to man whose breath is in his nostrils. Ministers die, but the ministry remains a perpetual monument, a gift of God to all generations.

**II. Many priests in discharging the duties of their calling are exemplary in their zeal.** Sometimes a Levite would leave his own home, and from intense love devote himself to the altar of the sanctuary. "Come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose." This is the true spirit of service, the spirit of the Master and of His apostles. No coldness and formality here. We often lack zeal and spiritual fervour; are too carnal, selfish, and slothful. Love is wanting. "O that I was all heart, and soul, and spirit," said Rowland Hill, "to tell the glorious gospel of Christ to perishing multitudes." We must sacrifice worldly pleasure, and personal convenience, and devote ourselves with energy to our work. "I longed to be as a flame of fire continually glowing in the Divine service," cried Brainerd. "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up (devoured like a flame)" (Jno. ii. 17; Ps. lxxix. 9).

**III. It is the duty of the people to support the priests in their calling.** "The priests" had their "due from the people." 1. *This is reasonable.* "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, it is a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things!" If a man gives his time and talents for the benefit of the people, surely they are bound to secure his temporal comforts. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." 2. *This is scriptural.* The principle laid down by our Lord and applied by apostles in support of the ministry is confirmed by scripture. "Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so the Lord hath ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." This arrangement helps to secure an efficient ministry, to promote mutual good, and to bring out energies for the spread of the gospel.

#### DESIRE FOR MINISTERIAL SERVICE.—Verse 6.

It appears that the Levites served in rotation from the earliest times; but from their great numbers, it was only at distant intervals they could be called into actual service. Should any Levite, however, under the influence of eminent piety, resolve to devote himself wholly and continually to the sacred duties of the Sanctuary, he was allowed to realise his ardent wishes; and as he was admitted to the share of the work, so also to a share of the remuneration (*Jamieson*). This desire for the work is a prominent feature in the character and qualifications of the Christian minister.

**I. It is a constraining desire.** More than a general desire to be useful—a special kindling within, like “the burning fire shut up” in the prophet’s bosom overcoming reluctance for God’s service (Jer. xx. 9). This constraint rises above all difficulties, and takes pleasure in sacrifices for the work’s sake. “This is a true saying (note the emphasis), if a man *desire* (vehemently, intensely) the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. iii. 1).

**II. It is a considerate desire.** The result of matured thought. The cost is counted, most watchful caution exercised, and the providence of God ascertained. Matthew Henry warns against intrusion into the sacred office. “We must not be *forward* to put forth ourselves in the exercise of spiritual gifts. Pride often appears under the pretence of a desire to be useful. If the motive be correct it is good, but *humility will wait for a call*.” “He that believeth shall not make haste.”

**III. It is a disinterested desire.** A choice not influenced by love of literature, respect and professional dignity. “With all brave and and rightly-trained men, their work is first, their fee second,” says Ruskin. It is an office in which we “seek not great things for ourselves.” God always implants a love in the heart for the service to which He calls, and better not enter than seek to get a name or maintain a party. “If I do this thing willingly (spontaneously without remuneration) I have a reward (verse 18), but if against my will (not spontaneously), a dispensation (a stewardship) is committed to me, “and so have no special claim to reward for that which necessity is laid upon me to do.” (1 Cor. ix. 17.)

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *The Lord their inheritance.* True of the believer as well as the Levite and priest. An inheritance.

1. *Divinely bestowed.* Not gained like earthly possessions by favouritism, wealth, and hereditary succession. 2. *Ever sufficient.* Men of the world seek pleasure here and there, labour for possessions and are doomed to disappointment. Charles V., Emperor of Germany, cried out to all his honours and trophies “Get you hence, no more of you.” 3. *Indissolubly sure.* It never diminishes, changes hands nor leads to poverty. “An everlasting portion.”

*Stand to minister.* 1. Priestly service, active, energetic ministry nor idleness, apathy nor negligent habits.

“Exercise thyself.” 2. Priestly spirit. Not selfish, but self-sacrificing and Christlike, which prompts to self-denial and readiness of mind. “Here Lord am I, send me.” 3. Priestly reward. In God the object of affection and centre of bliss. “I am their inheritance,” etc. (Ezek. xlv. 28).

Vers. 6-8. *Voluntary service.* 1. Devoted to the noblest purpose. 2. Rendered in the holiest place. 3. Springing from the warmest spirit. We must offer ourselves. Self-consecration, the first act of priestly service. “Our character is our will,” says Archbishop Manning, “for what we *will we are*.”

### THE VOCATION AND DUTY OF GOD’S PEOPLE.—Verses 9-13.

Israel had constantly to be warned against infection from the idolatrous customs of the Canaanites. The nature of such customs is described, and they are reminded of their calling and relation to God.

**I. God calls His people to be like Him.** “Be perfect with the Lord thy God” (verse 13). Israel were to be upright in conduct, unpolluted in worship,



and devoted entirely to Him. Likeness to God must be the aim of life. A Christian must progress in knowledge and love of God every day ; for the less we think of God, the greater the danger of conforming to the world. "Let us go on unto perfection." This is the high calling and destiny of the believer. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

**II. In responding to this call, they must avoid worldly customs.** Called out of the world, though living in it, they must avoid its "abominations," charmers and "observers of times." It has its witches, and "women of familiar spirits." Notions of lucky and unlucky days are not confined to heathen countries. In this country, men observe the stars, charm diseases, and prognosticate success of wars, the happiness or misfortune of marriages, and the length of human life. This dethrones God from the heart and supersedes the promises and threatenings of His word. It rejects the doctrine of Divine Providence and is treason to the Ruler of the Universe. "Should not a people seek unto their God ? for (on behalf of) the living (should they consult) to the dead ?" (Is. viii. 19).

**III. In seeking to avoid worldly customs God alone can help.** God alone had preserved Israel in the past. "Thy God hath not suffered thee so to do" (ver. 14). In the future, instead of having recourse to heathen superstitions, He would provide them with "a prophet," with divine teaching time after time. In Christ and the scripture we have help. If weak and sinful, God's grace can renew and strengthen. If dark and uncertain, the word is a light and guide. Christ completes what Moses begins. He is still performing the prophetic office, calling ministers by His Spirit, enlightening men to understand the scriptures and making the gospel come to them, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.

### HEATHEN ABOMINATIONS AVOIDED.

One reason to shun the practices of idolatry springs from the nature of the evils themselves. 1. *They are cruel.* Children "pass through the fire." How inhuman that religion which requires children to be burned or thrown into rivers, and parents in age and infirmity to be given to wild beasts ! "Cruelty is one of the highest scandals to piety," says Secker. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty (homesteads of violence.)"—*Kay*. (Ps. lxxiv. 20.) 2. *They are enticing.* Divination, enchanter and witch have their spells. Idolatry, "a shameful creed of craft and cruelty," delights in what fills the sensuous imagination. Ritualistic practices attract the eyes, fascinate the mind, and minister to self-conceit. "Who hath bewitched (fascinated) you, that ye should not obey the truth ?" (Gal. iii. 1). 3. *They are defiling* "Abominations." Paintings and sculptures, laws and legends, reveal the awful corruptions of the heathen world. All sin defiles, and men through sin "are together become unprofitable (corrupt, useless)" (Rom. iii. 12). Their odour is not praise and prayer, but the poison of asps and secreted malice. "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man." 4. *They are destructive.* "Because of these abominations the Lord doth drive them out." Sin drives away from God here and from heaven hereafter. The fruit of idolatry and superstitions is death. Death spiritual and death eternal. "Ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you, for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 13, 14. 1. *Preserving grace.* God did not suffer Israel to do these things. Other nations He "gave up to their own hearts' lusts, and suffered to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14-16). 2. *High vocation.* "Be perfect." Every man has an ideal, some ruling thought, some object of life. Religion sets forth the ends of life and supplies motives and power for striving for them. God is the desire of our nature, fills the highest capacities of the mind, and should be the aim of our life. 3. *Constant effort to reach it.* "Thou shalt not learn to do these." Life is a school in which we must learn to know God and do good.

Ver. 13. *Christian perfection.* A solemn injunction. I. Unfold its import. We must be perfect with the

Lord our God. 1. In love to His name. 2. In affiance to His care. 3. In zeal for His glory. II. Enforce its authority. Without real integrity before God, we can have—1. No comfort in our souls. 2. No stability in our ways. 3. No acceptance with God. Address—(1) Those who are unable to ascertain with confidence their real state. (2) Those who have an inward evidence that their hearts are right with God.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

*Perfect, i.e., whole, entire.* 1. In the elements of your character. Have nothing defective, weak and lacking. 2. In the method of your worship. No admixture of heathenism and error. 3. In the duties of your life. Be blameless, innocent, and upright. Scatter thy life through every part, and sanctify the whole.

## THE PROPHET LIKE TO MOSES.

Here Moses is not speaking of a collective body of prophets, to which Christ is at the end incidentally annexed, as Calvin and other expositors understand the passage; but the whole office and station of the prophets is represented to him as personified in Christ, as the person in whom his conception of that office would be perfectly realised. Thus there is a concurrent reference to the other prophets, not in their individual capacities, but only in relation to the Spirit, who, though in a manner not yet completed, was powerfully efficient in them and conjoined them along with their Head in one united body. They were viewed *in Christ*, as they were but His instruments; His spirit constituted the essence of their office. (*Hengstenberg*). Look at the principal circumstances in the description, *the likeness to Moses*.

**I. Like to Moses as a Prophet.** Man has ever sought instruction and desired light. Heathen oracles were dumb and philosophy impotent to satisfy this moral craving. Plato said "we must wait till someone shall teach us how we ought to conduct ourselves towards the gods"—Moses was a prophet of the highest rank who revealed and interpreted the will of God to men. Not merely a religious man, but one supernaturally inspired. But Christ was "the teacher sent from God." He came from the bosom of the Father and declared (expounded) him in all his relationships to man (John i. 18). He is the manifestation of God's character, the revelation of His purpose. The manifold partial disclosures of former messengers, have given place to one complete and final revelation in Christ. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

**II. Like to Moses as a Lawgiver.** Man requires law, loves order, and isappy only in loyal obedience. No Jewish prophet was legislator, no ruler had

right to govern supremely. David was king, inspired teacher and sweet psalmist of Israel, but his work was merely executive. Jesus only was like Moses the founder of a new constitution and a new period. He is the Head of the Church and the Sovereign of men. Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ has the natural right "as a son over his own house."

**III. Like to Moses as an Intercessor** (verse 16). When Israel sinned, Moses interceded with God, obtained forgiveness, and delivered from temporal punishments. Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises (Heb. viii. 6). When cursed by the law, condemned by conscience and afraid of intercourse with God, then even we find access and receive help through "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."

**IV. Like to Moses as leader of his people.** Moses was the general and leader of the nation. As chieftain of the community he administered their affairs, and led them in the wilderness. But he could bring them only to the borders of Canaan, and did not enter it himself. Christ guides through life into heaven, and will for ever satisfy His people with fruits of faith and holiness. We know not the way and could never discover it, but He leads by example and precept. There are enemies powerful and combined, but he commands, emboldens, and gives victory. "A leader, and commander to the people."

#### FALSE PROPHETS.—Verses 20-22.

1. *The presumption they display.* "Presume to speak," with a commission from false gods as prophets of Baal; or a pretended commission from the true God. Just as there were false Christs, so were there false prophets, who impersonated for popularity and gain. 2. *The test by which they are known.* "If thou say how?" It is often difficult to distinguish the true from the false, but facts and fulfilment are the test. Whatever teaching or prediction does not accord with history, scripture and God's will, we may be sure, is not from God. Samuel's mission was proved because God "let none of His words fall to the ground" (1 Sam. iii. 19, 20). 3. *The punishment which they endure.* "That prophet shall die." They seek to deceive, to draw away the people. They have committed high treason against the crown and authority of Jehovah, and had to be condemned by the Sanhedrim which sat at Jerusalem. Hence the people cautioned not to fear a false, but to obey a true prophet. The caution is needful in our day. "Beware of false prophets."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 15-19. 1. *Man's craving for light.* On all the great problems of life. God, the future and how to be just with God. 2. *Worldly wisdom unable to reveal light.* Man has "sought out" many inventions (entangled himself with an infinity of questions, *Douay Vers*) but never succeeded (Ecc. 7. 29). 3. God in mercy has given light. Raised up prophets, sent His Son and given His Spirit and Word. "Walk in the light," etc.

Ver. 18. *Christ like Moses.* 1. In coming from the people. "From among their brethren." 2. In the intercourse he had with God. With Moses God spoke "mouth to mouth." 3. In the attention which they demand. We must "hear." Some do not even hear, but ridicule and oppose. *Hearken* with attention and desire to learn. "In all" that I speak; not some things, as the love and mercy of God, but all things concerning justice, repentance,



and faith. There must be no choice, no separation of one doctrine from another. Disobedience results in death (Acts iii. 22, 23). "Every soul" without partiality, "shall be cut off." This excision, not correction, not annihilation, but death eternal. "From among the people." Intermixed now in families and congregations, then separated for ever.

This remarkable promise has two great objects of reference. First, the assurance that God would from time to time, after Moses, send such prophets as he was; that is persons who should make known to the Israelites the will of God, stimulate them to obey His precepts, and when it was requisite

foretell future events. These promises God faithfully fulfilled in Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and their successors down to the coming of the Messiah, who was known by the fulfilment of prophecy to be the promised Redeemer. The *second point* contained is the obedience to Christ with willing hearts. In His capacity as lawgiver, deliverer, and guide, His people hearken unto Him. (*Seiler.*) *Like unto me.* Both in the participation of nature and of office. A true man, and a true Mediator. *Similes* they are, but not *pares*; Christ being "worthy of more glory than Moses," and why, see *Heb.* iii. 3; vii. 22; 9. 15.—*Trapp.*

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XVIII.

Vers. 1-5. *Priests.* The priesthood hath, in all nations and all religions, been held highly venerable.—*Bp. Atterbury.* The vesture of that older priesthood is with us an adornment of the heart; and the glory of them that are chief in priesthood is to us no longer commended by the beauty of vestments, but by a splendour that is of the soul.—*St. Gregory.*

Ver. 6. *Desire of mind.* The virtues of the will are above the successions of time.—*Abp. Manning.* Most merciful Father! grant me to covet with an ardent mind those things which may please thee; to search them wisely, to know them truly, and to fulfil them perfectly; to the praise, laud, and glory of thy name. Order my living so that I may do that which thou requirest of me, and me give grace that I may know it, and have will and power to do it.—*Edward VI.*

Vers. 9-12. *Witch.* A border between earth and hell; her qualities are rather those of the former than of the latter.—*G. Gilfillan.* Those who go to astrology, or wise men as they call them, to know their fortunes and enquire of the events of their life, they

forsake God, and betake themselves to lying vanities.—*Abp. Tillotson.*

Submit thy fate to Heaven's indulgent care,  
Though all seems lost, 'tis impious to despair;  
The tracks of Providence, like rivers wind,  
And though immersed in earth from human eyes,  
Again break forth, and more conspicuous rise.  
*Young.*

Ver. 13. *Perfect.* Moral perfectibility is our destiny.—*G. Forster.* The Christian ought to know more of God every day; otherwise he may think of Him less, till he totally forgets Him; and then he is in danger of falling into that state, out of which men cannot be renewed by repentance.—*Jones of Nayland.*

Vers. 15-19. *Prophet.* The mission of the prophets was the religious education of the Jewish people. They were raised up according to the exigencies of the times to preserve them from error, and to prepare their minds for the future development of the kingdom of God. Their *object* was twofold—to maintain the Church in allegiance to prescribe rites, institutions and ordinances, and yet to prepare the people for a further

manifestation of the blessing of the new covenant.

Ver. 19. *Not hearken.* Man is deaf and blind in the things of God. "Having ears he hears not, having eyes he sees not." To his need and to his remedy he is alike insensible. His ear is open to sound advice, to moral

doctrine, to the dictates of external decency. But as to the gospel, he is a perfect statue without life.—*Bridge.* "Is the sermon done?" it was asked of one who returned from church sooner than usual. "No, not yet;" was the answer. "It is preached, but it still remains to be done."—*G. S. Bowes.*

## CHAPTER XIX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—This and the next two chapters contain enactments designed to protect human life, and to impress its sanctity on Israel.—*Speak. Com.*

With vers. 1-10 *cf.* Exodus xxi. 13, and Numbers xxxv. 9-34. The laws concerning cities of refuge are not mere repetitions, but an admonition to carry out former laws with reference to future extension of boundaries in the land of Canaan. Cities of refuge had already been set apart on the east of Jordan. Directions are given concerning land on the west. Three cities more were separated *cf.* Jos. xx.

Ver. 3. *Prepare.* The Senate made good roads two or three cubits wide—not mere tracks for animals—bridged over rivers and removed barriers. This done generally in the month Adar. Every facility was given to the fugitive (Is. xl. 3). *Ignorantly*, without premeditation—accidentally, as verse 5. *Avenger.* Whose duty it was to avenge the rights and redeem the property of kinsmen. *Not* with sudden excitement or burning desire to revenge.

Vers. 8-9. In case they should possess the whole land promised by God to the fathers for faithful obedience; then they were to add three more cities and have nine altogether. This command was not carried out because extension of country was never fully or permanently realised.

Vers. 10-13. Innocent blood would be shed if the unintentional manslayer was not protected. Israel would be guilty. *Blood upon thee*, if this duty was neglected. But the cities were not to be asylums for criminals. If a real murderer should flee for refuge, the (*elders*) magistrates of his own town were to fetch him back and deliver him to the avenger to be put to death.

Ver. 14. *Landmarks.* Not only is human life sacred, but the means of sustaining it must be held sacred—hence this prohibition. Gardens were enclosed, but fields were left open, or marked off, by a small trench, a little cairn or single stones easily removed.

Vers. 15-21. *False witness.* The rule concerning capital charges (chap. xvii. 6) is extended to all accusations before a court of justice. A single witness was not sufficient to convict a man of any civil or criminal offence. *Wrong, lit.*, falling away, apostacy (xiii. 5); here any kind of crime worthy of capital punishment (ver. 19). The accused and the witness were to come before Jehovah, viz., before the priests and judges, at the sanctuary and not before the local court.—*Keil.* If the witness had lied they were to act towards him as he intended towards his brother (*cf.* Prov. xix. 5-9; Dan. vi. 24. The *lex talionis* was applied without reserve (Ex. xxi. 23; Lev. xxiv. 20).—*Keil.* Observed in principle, not in letter, by the Jewish courts.—*Speak. Com.*

## CITIES OF REFUGE.—Verses 1-10.

Places of refuge where the guilty and unfortunate could find shelter were not unknown in heathen nations. Greece and Rome had their temples and groves. The *jus asyli*, the right of shelter was ever considered sacred. Cities of Refuge are some of the most delightful types of O. T. economy and may be considered in many ways (*cf.* chap. iv. 41-43). Look at them—

**I. As institutions promoting a spirit of humanity.** They would act beneficially in ages when violence and revenge predominated and when fixed habitations were few. They were founded with a view to abate evils springing from the old-established rights of the blood avenger, and thus created a mild and gentle spirit; gave proof of the superior wisdom and benignant design of the Jewish laws. Impartial trial was given. Love of justice and regard for truth were to overrule sentiment. Revenge was checked, innocent blood was not lightly shed, and human life was considered sacred.

**II. As institutions typical of Gospel truths.** They exhibit the only method of safety, into which if the sinner once enters he will be free from peril. 1. *The manslayer was in danger.* He was pursued by the avenger, and might lose his life. The sinner has broken the law, is exposed to its curse and condemnation—Christ the refuge set before him in the gospel. Should the law reach him before he flees for safety he is undone for ever. 2. *Refuge was easy of access.* The cities were conveniently fixed, and could often be seen. Christ is not a distant refuge, inaccessible or closed against us. "The word is nigh thee, not in heaven above, nor in the depth beneath" (Rom. x. 7, 8). 3. *The way was prepared.* "Prepare thee a way." Every river was bridged, every hillock levelled, and every obstruction that might hurt or hinder taken away. Guides or posts were fixed in every turning and cross road, with the words *refuge, refuge*, to direct the unhappy man in flight. The way of salvation is simple and plain, warfaring men, though fools, need not err therein. Ministers of the gospel are sent to urge, to direct the sinner to the Saviour. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Isa. xl. 3). 4. *Restoration was made at the death of the high priest.* The fugitive remained in the city beyond the pursuer's reach, gratuitously housed and taught until this event happened. Then he was released, restored to his relatives and "the land of his possession." In Christ we are restored to the inheritance forfeited by sin, adopted children, and made joint heirs of mansions which He has gone to prepare for those who love Him. Our salvation depends upon exclusive reliance in His merits and atoning death. "There is none other name under heaven" (Acts iv. 12).

#### FLIGHT WITHOUT SAFETY.—Verses 11–13.

There was a difference between *accidental* and *intentional* murder. The murderer might flee, but he was not protected in the city of refuge. He was delivered up to be put to death. A fearful picture of disappointed hope.

**I. Flight through atrocious wickedness.** Murder was a sin for which the law provided no remedy. "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer" (Num. xxxv. 31). To murder is to disregard the sanctity of life, resist the claims of our neighbour and demonstrate our hatred to God. Man is encircled by grandeur through his own immortality and his relation to the Infinite Majesty. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man."

**II. Flight without safety.** "The elders of the city send and fetch him. The murderer is pursued, brought back, and suffers. There is no escape from transgression. The law is broad, "exceeding broad" (Ps. cxix. 96) observes us in all we do, and goes where we go. God and conscience are omnipresent. Memory is alive and retribution is certain. "Murder will out" and "guilt hath no holiday," says Bacon.



**III. Flight ending in ruin.** "That he may die"—concealment was impossible. The avenger, the priests and the people, were all concerned in the detection and punishment of the criminal. 1. *Ruin without pity.* "Thine eye shall not pity him." 2. *Ruin without remedy.* "He that killeth a man shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xxiv. 17).

Murder may pass unpunished for a time,  
But tardy justice will o'ertake the crime.—*Dryden.*

### UNFULFILLED PROMISES.—*Verses 8-10.*

God promised that their dominion should extend from the Nile to the Euphrates (Gen. xv. 18 ; Ex. xxiii. 31). This promise was never really fulfilled. Hence learn that—

**I. God's promises express benevolent purpose.** "Enlarge thy coast" (verse 8). They reach far into our future, mark out, define and offer before-hand. They are accompanied by an oath and express the good pleasure of God.

**II. The fulfilment of God's promises is conditional.** "If the Lord thy God enlarge"—God does not work independently of means and agencies. He is Sovereign and Absolute, but we must co-operate with Him. Nothing is left to chance. Humanly speaking all depends upon us. "*If thou shalt keep.*"

**III. This fulfilment is not always realised.** There is no change in God, but human conditions are wanting. 1. *There is delay.* This strengthens and fortifies the enemy. When Hanibal could have taken Rome he *would* not, and when he *wished*, he was *unable*. 2. *There is sin.* Disobedience hinders. Unbelief excludes from the land. Israel's enlargement was transient through the sins of the people ; conquered nations regained independence, and Solomon's empire was dissolved.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1-6. *Cities.* 1. Cities of refuge divinely appointed. 2. Cities of refuge a protection for innocent blood. 3. Cities of refuge a proof of stringent law—original law not modified—special provision made for accidental manslaughter. 4. Cities of refuge a type of deliverance in Jesus. The atonement is not a violation or suspension of law, yet mercy and deliverance from penalty are given to him who flees to Christ. "The reason of these institutions seems to be this:—*First* of all, their appointment arose from a great law. *Secondly*, they were instituted to be an expressive foreshadow or type of a grand and precious shelter for all the people of God."—*Cumming.*

flee. 1. The word nigh. 2. Ministers direct. 3. The Holy Spirit helps.

Ver. 5. *That he die.* 1. Human life taken by trifling accidents. What need for preparation. The sons of men are "snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them" (Ecc. ix. 12). 2. Human life safeguarded by Divine institutions. The law forbids murder. If this happens unintentionally cities are built for refuge. Life is hedged about by law, justice, humanity, and providence.

Vers. 11-13. The cities were no shelter for wilful murder. 1. Mark the origin of the crime. "*Hate* his neighbour." Cain hated his brother, could not speak peaceably to him, and then killed him. "Whoso *hateth* his

Ver. 3. *Prepare.* Every facility to

brother is a murderer" (1 Jno. iii. 15). 2. Notice the plot to carry out the design. "Lie in wait for him." Men who thirst for blood hate the upright, and seek to destroy them. Saul sought to murder David, the Jews the Saviour and Paul. Malice will plot. The words and aims of the wicked "are to lie in wait for blood" (Prov. xii. 6).

Ver. 13. *Pity*. 1. Without pity, lest crime should be encouraged, the criminal protected, and society injured. 2. Without pity lest the ends of justice be frustrated and the law of God broken. 3. Without pity, to warn and deter others from the danger.

#### ANCIENT LANDMARKS REMOVED.—Verse 14.

Stones indicating boundaries might easily be removed. Ditches could be secretly levelled. This would materially affect property, and be a great evil in a land where territory was distributed by lot. Removal would be—

**I. To disregard ancient custom.** "They of old have set," with care and justice. "Custom is held as law." Fixed law and fixed boundaries should be respected. But many scorn ancient landmarks as relics of bygone days. Impatient of restraint, they seek wider range of thought and action, indulge in novelties, and cry, down with temples, and away with creeds and the Bible!

**II. To violate the law of God.** Heathen nations held every landmark as sacred; honoured every stone and staple as a god without whose aid every field would be subject to contention and strife. God as the proprietor of all the earth sets bounds for Israel, allotted their lands which they held in trust, and bound them in terms imposed by His will (Deut. xxvii. 17). Hence removal of landmarks is violation of His command, and direct insult to His authority.

**III. To defraud our neighbour.** Landmarks were memorials and witnesses of the rights of each man. Removal was selfish and unjust invasion of property. To enlarge your own estate at the expense of your neighbour's is theft. Each one should know his own, and not defraud another by concealment, forgery, or robbery. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him" (Lev. xix. 13; Mark x. 19; 1 Thess. iv. 6).

**IV. To expose to a dreadful curse.** The execration of men is something, but who can bear the curse of God. The field of the fatherless is under Almighty protection. None can arm themselves against Him by entering it. The poor may seem helpless, but special warning is given against their oppression. "Remove not the old landmark, and enter not into the fields of the fatherless (by acts of violence or removal of boundaries) for their Redeemer is mighty, to vindicate outraged innocence" (Prov. xxiii. 10, 11). This in aftertimes was the great affront of national provocation. "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bounds, therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water" (Hos. v. 10).

**I. Landmarks, an indication of Divine care.** Nothing is too insignificant for God's notice. The cities with their roads, the fields with their boundaries, the minute and the vast are under his guardianship. He sets bounds to sea and land and controls each element in its limit (Job xxxviii. 10, 11). **II. Landmarks, a vindication of the rights of property.** Fields and gardens must be cultivated and held as personal estate. Land is not to be indiscriminately portioned out. God gives allotments to men, and personal property is needful for daily employment and healthy life. **III. Landmarks, a check to fraud and rapacity.** They warned against deceitful and unjust actions. We must neither touch nor covet our neighbour's property. The avaricious and

envious are checked by the order of society and the laws of nature. IV. *Landmarks, a motive to neighbourly kindness.* To remove them would injure our neighbour and disturb the community. We are not to sow discord nor create strife and law-suits, but to live peaceably together. "Strive not with a man without cause." V. *Landmarks, symbols of fixed spiritual truths.* There are certain fundamental and established doctrines which must not be removed, which can never be shaken. Rome may remove landmarks of Scripture by her traditions. Impatience of restraint, independence of spirit, and resistance to Divine authority may characterise the age. But the chief landmarks of faith stand solid and impregnable as a rock. "The foundation of God standeth sure."

#### THE TRIAL OF CAPITAL OFFENCES.—Verses 15-21.

"The wrong" in verse 16 is not merely falling into idolatry, but any kind of crime worthy of capital punishment (verse 19). One witness even was tested and punished if proved false. Judges were to investigate most carefully and administer justice most rigidly—

**I. The testimony of one witness was not enough to condemn** (chap. xvii. 6) He might be prejudiced, interested or unable to judge rightly. Individuals are not always truthful and cannot be trusted. Hence it is wise, as proved by history and human experience, that the life of an innocent man should not depend upon the testimony of one witness. What a dishonour cast upon mankind by the law! suspected of unfaithfulness! and what a check to accusers of men!

**II. The accuser and the accused were to stand before God.** "Both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord" (verse 17). All sin is committed against God. He cannot permit evil to go unpunished. He will expose and visit it with condemnation. 1. Before "the priests and the judges," who represent Him. 2. In the sanctuary, the residence of His glory. This is a picture of future trial, when the sinner will stand before the judgment seat and all iniquity be punished.

**III. If the witness was false the punishment was severe.** No sentimentalism nor misplaced compassion must be shown to a false witness. The law was inflexible, and one guilty of perjury was doomed to suffer penalty. 1. *Punishment in kind.* "Do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother" (verse 19). The *lex talionis* is applied, a person receives to himself what he gives to another; a law of retribution, which is God's law to warn the transgressor. 2. *Punishment without reserve.* No indifference in the search, "diligent inquisition;"—no hesitation in executing the law; no pity whatever for the criminal. "Thine eye shall not pity" one who had no pity for another. "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape" (Prov. xix. 5).

#### A FALSE WITNESS.—Verse 16.

Society cannot exist without laws, and laws cannot be administered without testimony. False witness or perjury therefore is the most obnoxious of crimes, and as such deserves the severest condemnation.

**I. A false witness is offensive to God.** God is represented as "a God of truth, and without iniquity" (Deut. iii. 2, 4); "a God that cannot lie" (Job i. 2). The perjurer takes His name in vain; dishonours His attributes,



and defies His law. When we prevaricate, conceal truth, or speak lies, we insult the God of heaven, "the faithful and true witness."

**II. A false witness is injurious to society.** In his *heart* he is uncharitable and envious towards his fellow-men. In his *actions* he is mischievous to society. He destroys its confidence, breaks its bonds, and becomes an agent of the devil, "the father of lies" (1 Kings xxi. 13). "The slanderer," says Archbishop Leighton, "wounds three at once; himself, him he speaks of, and him that hears." His cruelty and malice are set forth by three murderous instruments—weapons of death. "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow" (Prov. xxv. 18).

**III. A false witness should be put down by every possible means.** "So shalt thou put the evil away" (verse 19). Everyone is interested in the suppression of crime. Priests, judges, and people—society and the Christian Church are concerned. All should love truth and put down deceit (Col. iii. 9; Rom. iii. 13). "That shalt not raise (*marg. receive*) a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness" (Ex. xxiii. 1).

Dare to be true, nothing can need a lie;  
The fault that needs it most grows two thereby.

#### THE LAW OF RETALIATION.—Verses 19-21.

Among the Israelites and in all nations where slavery existed, or where owners had the power of punishment in their own hands, the exercise of absolute authority was liable to be abused. Hence the importance and place of this law.

**I. Its use in the Old Testament.** It is probable that the law existed before the time of Moses, and was accepted by him as tolerable. It would be suitable—  
1. *As an elementary principle of justice.* Theoretically it seems exact and right. It was accepted by magistrates as a rule in civil law. It is found in the code of primitive nations, recognised by the laws of Solon, by ancient Indians, and by the Thurians (*cf. Speak. Com.*; Ex. xxi. 22-25). It is the first lesson of civilization and public justice. "Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye," etc. (Ex. xxi. 23; Lev. xxiv. 20). 2. *As a foundation of public morality.* Power is often abused. Men forget and break the golden rule. Human life must be respected, wrong rectified, and laws administered. There must be no connivance in guilt. "Hand for hand, foot for foot." 3. *As a check to private revenge.* "Revenge is sweet," and men like to take law into their own hands. The law of the eternal must be asserted and vindictive tempers subdued. "He that studieth revenge keepeth his wounds open."—*Bacon*. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord."

**II. Its exposition in the New Testament.** The scribes took their stand on the letter, disregarded the design and spirit of the law, and expounded in the wrong direction. Their popular casuistry made it one of private retaliation and not of judicial action. But the disciple of Christ, in suffering wrong, must cherish no desire to retaliate and accuse. He must be prepared in word and act to show the spirit of his master. The letter may not bind, but the principle should be the law of life. We are not to revenge, but cultivate the habit of non-resistance to evil (*cf. Mat. v. 38-42*). The law of the New Testament is not contradictory to that of the Old Testament. It is more than a civil enactment. It is forbearance with those who wrong us, well-doing to those who hate us, the characteristic and image of God's children (Mat. v. 48).

And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice.

*The law of requital.* 1. *A doctrine of scripture.* "As I have done, so God hath requited me" (Jud. i. 7). "The Lord of recompenses shall surely requite." "With what measure ye mete," etc. "A false witness shall not be unpunished" (Prov. xix. 5-9). 2. *A law of providence.* Men may deny and disregard it; but they cannot destroy, cannot escape this righteous and holy law. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. "He that speaketh lies shall not escape." 3. *A reason for submission to God.* Indulge in no passion. Fret not because of evil doers. It costs more to revenge injuries than to bear them. Events are not under the control of wicked men. "Say not, then, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord and He shall save thee."

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 11-21. Learn. — 1. Great wickedness often found among men—murder, fraud, perjury. Oppressive to society, insulting to God, and abounding even in Christian countries. 2. Divine methods of overcoming this wickedness. By religious laws and social restraints, by functions of state and spiritual institutions. What a debt we owe to the gospel which renews and controls man, elevates and purifies society!

Vers. 16-19. *False witness.* 1. God is a God of truth, promotes it in the world and seeks it in His people. 2. Truth should be sacred to us in all circumstances of life. 3. The danger of lying. 4. The necessity of grace and prayer.

Ver. 19. *Retribution.* 1. An appointment of God in social and civil, in national and individual life. 2. A warning to others. Sir W. Raleigh, challenged by a hot-headed youth,

refused to fight. The young man spat in his face in public. Thinking of the consequences, Sir W. calmly wiped his face and replied, "Young man, if I could as easily wipe your blood from my conscience as I can this injury from my face, I would this moment take away your life."

Ver. 20. *Hear.* Others' woes should be our warnings, others' sufferings our sermons (1 Cor. x. 5-12). God's house of correction is the school of instruction.—*Trapp.*

Vers. 19-21. *Pity and justice.* 1. Justice from the highest source of the land. The presence and the representatives of God. 2. Justice without pity. Right better than pity. 3. Justice for public good. "Those which remain hear and commit no more evil." Life often sacrificed for the welfare of the community. True patriotism displayed in the suppression of crime.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIX.

Vers. 1-10. *Cities.* A party of travellers in the desert were overtaken by the fierce simoon. Like blinding snow driven by the winds of March came the hot sands. Before the simoon had reached its height they came suddenly upon a rude building of stone, well protected with roof and doors, which the hand of charity had erected there in the desert for shelter. With joy they rushed into it, closed the doors, and were safe.

"The wonders of life and gladness,  
All the wonders of hope and fear;  
The wonders of death and sadness,  
All the wonders of time are there."  
—*Bonar.*

Ver. 11. *Hate.* Whoever hates kills the soul.—*Vinet.* A true man hates no one.—*Napoleon I.* "From envy, hatred and malice," etc.

Ver. 12. *Deliver him.* By the conviction and execution of a murderer,

humanity is not extinguished but enlarged; it is individual compassion overcome by a regard to the general good.—*A. Fuller.*

Ver. 14. *Landmarks removed.* Covetousness, by a greediness of getting more, deprives itself of the true end of getting it; it loses the enjoyment of what it has got.—*Sprat.* Desire of having is the sin of covetousness.—*Shakspeare.*

Ver. 18. *False witness.*

Sworn on every slight pretence,  
Till perjuries are common as bad pence;  
While thousands, careless of the dawning sin,  
Kiss the book's outside, who ne'er look within.  
—*Cowper.*

Vers. 19-21. *Not pity.* Most just it is that he who breweth mischief should have the first draught of it himself.—*Jemmat.*

Revenge at first, though sweet,  
Bitter ere long back on itself recoils.  
—*Milton.*

## CHAPTER XX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Reverence for life, and that which tends to preserve it, was the motive for laws given in last chapter. The same is the basis of those in this chapter. Even in time of war, forbearance was to be exercised in respect of Israelites themselves who are levied for war (vers. 1-9); in respect of the enemy (vers. 10-15); Canaanitish nations alone excepted (vers. 16-18); and in respect of the property of the vanquished. (*Speak. Com.*)

Vers. 1-9. *Instructions for military service.* Prospective in nature, but of permanent authority; not a temporary arrangement in prospect of war, but standing orders in future settlement of Israel. *Horses*, the chief strength of nations surrounding (Ex. xiv. 7; Josh. xvii. 6; Jud. iv. 3).

Ver. 2. *Priest*, not high priest, but one appointed; called by Rabbins "the anointed of war," like Phinehas (Num. xxxi. 6), who exhorted the people in formula (vers. 3 and 4). *Tremble, lit.*, make haste, as if confused.

Ver. 5-7. *Officers, i.e.*, the Shoterim, roll-keepers (Ex. v. 6-10) (*Sept.* scribes), whose duty to muster men and announce orders of generals (2 Chr. xxvi. 11). Exemptions given. *Dedicated* the house on taking possession, by certain religious ceremonies (*cf.* Neh. xii. 27; Ps. xxx.) (title). A yearly immunity. *Eaten* (ver. 6), *lit.*, made it common. When fruit trees were planted (Lev. xix. 23) and vines set (Jud. xix. 24) fruit was not eaten the first four years, but set apart from common uses. *Betrothed*, always considerable time before marriage. *Faint* (ver. 8), *melt*, or *flow down*, become despondent (Gen. xvii. 15; Jos. vii. 5). *Captains* at the head of the people, in smaller levies (vers. 10-20). Instructions concerning *sieges*, to prevent wanton destruction of life and property.

Ver. 10. If towns peaceably surrendered, armed men were not put to death. Offensive wars not encouraged. *Tributaries* conquered nations would become servants, yet receive the highest blessings in alliance with Israel (2 Sam. xx. 18-20). If besieged cities refused to capitulate, those found in arms, *every male* put to death. Women and children kindly treated (ver. 14).

Vers. 15-18. With Canaanitish towns Israel was not to act thus. *These people* put under the ban must be exterminated. *Nothing that breatheth, lit.* every breath by which human beings alone are understood (*cf.* Josh. x. 40; xi. 11, with chap. xi. 14). If the siege was long, *trees* were not cut down (ver. 19). Various renderings have been given of this difficult text. The general sense seems to be that man's life depends upon the fruit of the trees, in a sense he is identified with them; their destruction would be a sort of sacrilege, and would diminish fuel and hinder military operations. *Trees* whose fruit not edible, cut down and used for ramparts in siege (Ezek. iv. 2).

## RIGHTEOUS WAR.—Verses 1-5.

Israel was not a warlike nation, but they were about to enter into serious conflict with other nations. In future years they might have to maintain their



independence and defend themselves from aggression. Instructions are given to show the spirit in which war must be undertaken, carried on and finished. If war was inevitable the Providence of God would lead them into it. That would be righteous war.

**I. War undertaken to accomplish the purpose of God.** Israel undertook war, not of their own accord; not for selfish aggrandisement nor to realise ambitious schemes. They were commanded by God to possess the land. Fearful may be the consequences of rash and inconsiderate war. "In the name of our God we will set up our banners."

**II. War sanctioned by the will of God.** Every nation prays for its armies; but no war in which the presence of God cannot be expected is justifiable. 1. *God's will is ascertained by His presence.* "The Lord thy God is with thee." God may permit enterprises, but never helps them when they oppose His will. Israel rebelled, "went presumptuously up into the hill; God went not with them and they were smitten by the Amorites (Deut. i. 43, 44). 2. *God's will is declared by His servants.* "The priest shall approach and speak unto the people." They are not mere captains of the army, but ministers of God, reminding of the past and encouraging for the present. Their presence and help indicate God's purpose. "The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever" (Num. x. 8).

**III. War conducted by the precepts of God.** Here are specific directions, commands from God concerning war. War unprovoked and for unlawful conquest finds no sanction in God's word. When it becomes a necessity to defend ourselves and punish evil doers, when it cannot justly be avoided, "The belligerent nation then becomes the executioner of Divine judgments, but it must also know and confess that it is used by God for this purpose, and that it only carries on war aright when it does so with this conviction. Then only can we come before God with confidence and a good conscience, because it is His will that we have performed; and every wilfully undertaken war forbids our having free and happy access to God."—*Luthardt*. "Every purpose is established by counsel, and with good advice make war."

### CHRISTIAN LIFE A WARFARE.

In war, God alone was Israel's confidence. Their enemies might excel in numbers and in military strength, but they were not to be afraid. God would protect and help them.

**I. This warfare is against mighty enemies.** Surrounding nations were often a terror to Israel. The Christian fights against powerful odds; principalities and powers in earthly and heavenly places. 1. *Enemies great in number.* "A people more than thou." God is not always with the strongest battalions. Numbers are often ranged against Him and His people. But He counts nations as nothing and less than nothing. 2. *Enemies terrible in equipment.* Horses and chariots were most formidable elements of ancient nations. "Some trust in chariots and some in horses," but that is confidence vain and displeasing to God. Glorious were the victories when Israel renounced trust in human strength. "The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety (victory) is of the Lord."

**II. In this warfare right men are wanted.** Every soldier is not valiant. Gideon's army was sifted, and many in Israel were sent away for lack of faith and enthusiasm. 1. *Good leaders are wanted.* Men "anointed for war," as

the Rabbins called the priests—men of the stamp of Henry Havelock and Hedley Vicars. Men of undaunted courage, strong in God and prepared to lead. 2. *Good soldiers are wanted.* Soldiers who can endure hardness. *a. Soldiers conscious of right.* For if a man feels that he is in the wrong, he fears detection, disgrace and punishment. Macbeth started at the whisper of every wind. "Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful."—*Shakspeare.* *b. Soldiers willing to serve.* Volunteers, not pressed men. None can be forced. Service that is forced is weakness and useless. Our hearts must be in the conflict or we fight in vain. *c. Soldiers full of courage.* The faint-hearted injure the *morale* of the troops. Fear is contagious and leads to flight. Beware of this infection, "neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid" (Is. viii. 12).

III. In this warfare we should not be disheartened. "Let not your hearts faint; fear not, and do not tremble." Why be terrified? Opponents flee before a brave man. "One of you shall chase a thousand." 1. *God's providence encourages us.* "Brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." There is constant reference to this deliverance most striking and instructive. History unfolds Divine providence; abounds with proofs of omnipotence, and pledges of help. Examples are cited to animate to fortitude and virtue. 2. *God's presence is with us.* "The Lord thy God is with thee." Not merely as commander, but "goeth with you" into the greatest danger. Not as a spectator, like Xerxes, who viewed the conflict from on high, but "to fight for you" with the determination "to save you." "The Lord thy God, *He* it is," not a common general, "that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

#### THE EXEMPTIONS IN WAR.—Verse 5-9.

Soldiers must be as free from care and cowardice as possible. Wellington declared "that the power of the greatest armies depends upon what the individual soldier is capable of doing and bearing." Four classes are here exempted:—

I. Those involved in business. The soldier leaves his private business when he enlists to serve his country. The farmer leaves his plough, the mechanic his shop, and the merchant his store. In Israel those were not called to serve who, from circumstances and prospects, would feel most keenly the hardship. 1. *Those engaged in dedicating a house.* They must return to their house lest another dedicate it. 2. *Those engaged in planting a vineyard* must enjoy the fruit of it. Building and planting are good and needful for the community, but encumber the soldier.

II. Those hindered by social ties. "What man hath betrothed a wife and not taken her" (ver. 7; chap. xxiv. 5). "It was deemed a great hardship to leave a house unfinished, a new property half-cultivated, and a recently contracted marriage unconsummated, and the exemptions allowed in these cases were founded on the principle, that a man's heart being deeply engrossed with something at a distance, he would not be very enthusiastic in the public service." (*Jamieson*). In an army there should be one heart, one purpose and one desire to please the commander. In the *corps* of Christian soldiers there is entire obedience to the will of the Captain of our Salvation. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life: that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

III. Those deficient in personal qualifications. The fearful and faint-hearted were not permitted to war. 1. *In moral qualifications.* Some think that the

fear named arose from an evil conscience which makes a man afraid of danger and death. Men of loose and profligate lives are often cowards and curses to an army. Hence those conscious of guilt were to be sent away. "A guilty conscience needs no accuser." "Conscience makes cowards of us all." 2. *In natural qualification.* The allusion seems to be natural cowardice. Men reverence bravery, but cowards are objects of scorn. Wellington said of some foreigners who ran away from the field of Waterloo, "Let them go; we are better without them." There must be no fear in officers or men. No cowards in the ranks lest the army flee before the enemy. "Let him go and return unto his house lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart."

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Fear forbidden.* Israel had seen little of war, only a few brushes in their journey with inferior adversaries. Things would soon become more serious. Hence alarm and need of admonition and encouragement. All Christians are soldiers and wage a good warfare. It is a necessary and trying warfare—continues through every season and in every condition. The forces of their enemies may be superior in number, vigilance, wisdom and might. Hence danger of alarm and need of fortitude in the warrior. None have better grounds for courage than we, not in ourselves for then we must fail. *First*, the Divine presence: "For the Lord thy God is with thee." Antigonus said to his troops, dismayed at the numbers of the foe, "How many do you reckon me for?" But God is all-wise and almighty. Nothing is too hard for the Lord, and if He be with us, "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world." *Secondly*, His agency: "Who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." To a Jew, this was not only a proof but a pledge; not only showed what He *could* do, but was a voucher of what He *would* do. He is always the same, and never suffers what he has done to be undone. Strange would it have been, after opening a passage through the sea, to have drowned them in Jordan. What would have been thought of His great name, after placing himself at their head to lead them to Canaan, if He had suffered them to be overcome

by the way? He, who begins the work, is not only able to finish, but begins it for the very purpose. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things?"—*Jay*.

Vers. 2, 3. *The priest helping the soldier.* The priest shall approach and speak unto the people. "A minister of peace an advocate of war" only when war is justified. Even then only in showing how to regulate, mitigate, and direct it. Learn—1. The connection of religion with war in its sanctions and inspirations. 2. The business of the priest to caution the leaders and encourage the soldiers in a righteous contest.

Ver. 5. *Building and dedicating a house.* 1. By liberality to the poor. Festive ceremonies and entertainments were given. 2. By consecrating it to God through whose aid it had been built and by whose blessing it would prosper. There should be a family altar and a family religion. "A church in the house" (Psalm 30th—compare title). This the best ornament and defence of the house.

Ver. 8. *Faint-hearted.* 1. Cowardice weakens—faint, fear, tremble and terrify (ver. 3) are degrees of weakness. 2. Cowardice renders incapable of right impressions. Let not your hearts be *tender* to receive impressions of fear and despair. Melting hearts are like hot iron, capable of any impression. "*Steel*



your hearts." 3. Cowardice affects others. "Lest his brethren's heart faint."

Ver. 5-9. *Defective armies* (churches or organizations). 1. Requiring to be sifted. The incapable and unfit sent home. 2. Requiring to be re-organized. "Captains" chosen fit "to lead the

people." Defects remedied and efficiency secured. Much to be done before the Christian Church can fight and conquer the world.

*Christianity and Heroism.* Christianity makes true heroes in war. Rulers in church and state should be chosen on account of spiritual or Christian character.

### THE METHOD OF CONDUCTING WAR.—*Verses 10-15.*

When Israel came nigh a city not belonging to the Canaanites, they were to summon it to peaceable surrender and submission (Jud. xxi. 13). Moses does not encourage aggressive war. If the town resisted a regular siege was undertaken, and when captured males were slain, women and children spared, and booty appropriated to their own use.

**I. Try mild measures before severe.** Even in war there should be honour and justice. 1. *Offer peace before war.* "Proclaim peace unto it." In the settlement of quarrels, be ready to give and to submit to arbitration, proposals of peace. God in mercy offers peace to sinners—has no pleasure in their destruction, but beseeches them to be reconciled to Him. 2. *Make men tributary rather than exterminate them.* If peace proposals were accepted, they must acknowledge the supremacy of Israel by tribute-money. They must renounce idolatry and become servants. Then their conquerors would be their protectors. If we yield to God and become His servants, we shall not only be saved from destruction, but become fellow-citizens with saints and members of God's household.

**II. Display the spirit of humanity.** In most barbarous times this has often been seen. Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon were not devoid of feeling. 1. *Spare property.* Cities not plundered, trees not destroyed. Cattle and spoil to be appropriated to personal use. 2. *Spare human lives.* Helpless women and innocent children not to be touched. Here is a degree of self-control not displayed in modern Christian warfare.

### A WAR OF EXTERMINATION.—*Verses 16-18.*

The Canaanites were to be completely exterminated. They fell under the judicial displeasure of God and were utterly ruined, as the only means to preserve Israel from moral corruption. Learn—

**I. That men may become so wicked that utter ruin ensues.** Of cities given to Israel no remnant of inhabitants must be spared. Canaanites must not share with Israelites in the land of promise. No terms of peace were offered them. They had filled up the measure of iniquity; had become totally averse to God; and were abandoned to their awful doom. Their punishment was not the execution of revenge upon enemies, but the result of their own wickedness, the fulfilment of a Divine sentence upon that wickedness. "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth."

**II. This utter ruin ensues lest the people of God should be endangered.** Israel would have been corrupted by the lives and idolatry of Canaanites.

God's people are morally endangered by the pollutions and customs of the world. God is concerned for their character and preservation (Ex. xxxiv. 11-16). He loves them, and has given men for them, and people for their life (Is. xliii. 4). "That they teach you not to do after their abominations."

**III.** What a warning this utter ruin should be to all. First to God's people. What a motive for separation from sin and the world! What an argument for obedience when the disobedient are punished so fearfully. War against sin should be one of extermination. The least evil, if spared, may ruin the character. But to the impenitent and ungodly, here is a picture of the destruction which awaits them unless found in Christ. They are reserved "unto the judgment of the great day."

#### PRESERVATION OF FRUIT TREES.—*Verses 19, 20.*

In carrying on war, leaders are apt to indulge in passion and destroy everything within reach. In a long siege, Israel might use non-fruit-bearing trees, but those bearing fruit were not to be touched.

**I.** God's laws are intended to check unlawful feeling and action. God is more merciful than we are. Food trees and human life have been wantonly destroyed, and military rage is often most furious. The ravages of war must be checked. A voice must be heard, above the tramp of horsemen and the command of kings. "Thou shalt not."

**II.** God's laws prohibit any wilful waste at all times. God ever consults our interests and economises our resources. "The Jews," says Henry, "understand this as a prohibition of all wilful waste upon any account whatsoever. No fruit tree is to be destroyed, unless it be barren and cumber the ground. Nay, they maintain, 'Whoso wilfully breaks vessels, tears clothes, stops wells, pulls down buildings, or destroys meat, transgresses this law. Thou shalt not destroy.'" Broken fragments must be gathered up, that nothing be lost. Every creature is good in its end, and nothing must be refused or abused.

#### ON SPARING FRUIT TREES.

What are the lessons touching our own life which are suggested by this exemption? 1. Spare the fruit trees,—*Then men are to be self-controlled under the most exciting circumstances.* Jews were to bear this restriction in mind at a time when most intensely excited. It was not to be remembered in moments of tranquilly, but to be sent before them, when fiercest passions were ablaze. We have been taught "that all is fair in war"—this law contradicts that proverbial morality. We are not to excuse wantonness by pleading excitement of circumstances. Beautiful the provision that in the keenest contest there was to be recollection of law! It should be so in our lives. In this day of fierce competition men are in danger of giving themselves up to passion, rather than judgement, and pleading the pressure of circumstances as an excuse for doing some things they would never think of doing in calmer moments. Such plea is vicious. Even in battle men are not to lose reflectiveness, in the presence of death they must remember the law of God. 2. Spare the fruit trees. *Then do not force a present victory at the expense of future suffering.* Victories may cost too much. What, if after conquest, we have cut off sources of supply

and left ourselves without bread and water? The frequent question should be not, can I reach yonder point? but can I reach it without sacrificing obedience to divine law? You may get your own way in life, but what if you have to burn an *orchard* in doing so? A fruit tree standing between you and victory may appear a small thing, but that small thing represents the sources at which life renews itself. What if a man gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

3. Spare the fruit trees. *Then judge all things by their highest usefulness and not by their temporary advantages.* The tree might have been useful for *bulwarks* but there was a higher use to which it could be put, and its treatment was determined by this higher use. Things are not judged by their meanest, but by their highest possibilities. Are we living along the line of our highest capabilities, or consulting the conveniences of the passing moment? Who can find a fruit tree being cut down to help a man over a brooklet, when the meanest gate-post would have done just as well? Yet men lie in the dust, when they could exert most beneficial influence upon society. "Aim high, for he who aimeth at the sky shoots higher far than he who means a tree."

4. Spare the fruit trees. *Then man has it in his power to inflict great mischief upon himself and upon society.* You can cut down. You have *power* to do mischief, but not *right*. A man may show strength in cutting down, but if he knew it he would show far greater strength in not doing so. Forbearance is often the last point of power. What is the Christian application of all this?

1. All in Christ Jesus are expected to bear *fruit*. 2. Only as Christians *bear fruit* will they be spared by Jesus Christ Himself. 3. Only in so far as Christians bear fruit ought they to *receive toleration at the hands of society*. 4. It is possible to bring forth *evil fruit*. 5. Fruit trees must be *pruned*. "That ye may bring forth much fruit" (Vol. III., *The City Temple*).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 10-15. *Mercy and wrath.*  
 I. Offered mercy precedes the execution of wrath. 1. A city besieged. 2. Summons to surrender; city not to fall by sudden surprise, or unwarned. 3. Offer of peace. II. Condign punishment follows rejected mercy. Such rebels, if permitted to escape, would raise the standard of revolt elsewhere, and strengthen the resistance of other towns. Learn—1. The gospel a message of reconciliation. 2. The gospel accepted brings peace. 3. The gospel rejected declares the eternal ruin of the rejector.—*Bib. Museum.*

Ver. 19. Our interpretation of the primeval law of food is strongly confirmed by this passage and the essential wickedness of destroying the *sources* of human sustenance and comfort. The idea is that the *tree* which God planted is for *all* the children of men who pass

by or dwell near, and need its fruit for food—a *permanent* supply, which no temporary exigency must be suffered to destroy. The Mahommedans to this day observe this law, and a curious story is related of the Arabian prophet, that when on one occasion in the siege of a fortress, prolonged by the access of the besieged during the night to the *date palms* outside its walls, he ordered some of his personal followers secretly to cut down these palm trees, his soldiers next morning remonstrated, so that Mahommed had to invent a special commission for the work, which however, he never afterwards repeated. (*Temperance Com.*) Fruit trees might not be destroyed. Doth God take care for trees? It was to teach us that if we bring forth fruit fit for God's taste and relish, sanctifying God and Christ in our hearts, we shall not be destroyed.—*Trapp.*



## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1. *Battle.* On the whole subject of Old Testament wars we give an extract from a paper read at the Church Congress last week (Oct. 14, 1885):—"The Old Testament takes man as he is, with savage, war-like instincts, and does not ignore his nature and proclaim at once the reign of peace. But the people are taught to see war in a new light. It is taken out of the hands of man and becomes God's prerogative. Man wages war only as his vice-regent. He is fighting 'the battle of the Lord.' There is nothing *personal* in the campaigns of Israelites, nothing *national* except so far as the cause of Israel is the cause of God. It is a great advance in civilization when men neither take the law into their own hands nor suffer a relative to be the avenger of blood, but trust to the administration of impersonal law. Revenge, which in the individual is a kind of wild justice, is then transformed into that righteous indignation which is the root of the judicial system. This was the first, the indirect blow to the war-spirit of the Jews. But they had more to learn—that God is a God of battles is only a half truth. The higher truth was dimly shadowed forth when the patriarchal conqueror did homage to the mysterious King of Peace—when the wars of conquest were over and the chosen people established in the land their King, 'a man of war' is forbidden to build the temple and the honour given to 'a man of rest.' From first to last the Jews were taught that the explanation of the present is in the future, and as this kingdom becomes clearer it is revealed as a kingdom of peace. This Old Testament teaching in respect to war is *propædæutic*, leading men on by little and little till they could sit at the feet of Jesus; and *provisional*,

destroyed only by being fulfilled."—*Rev. Aubrey L. Moore.*

Vers. 1, 4. *God with thee.* When the Crusaders encamped before Jerusalem, a terrible struggle ensued. The Saracens, who possessed the city, bore down upon them in countless numbers, and it seemed as though all was lost to the Christian army. All at once a joyful cry rang through the ranks—"St. James is with us! He fights on our side!" In the excitement of the conflict some of them fancied they saw the apostle in the clouds advancing to help them! It gave them new courage. They rushed forward with an energy which could not be withstood, and the battle was won.

Vers. 5-9. Roman soldiers were not allowed to marry, or engage in any husbandry or trade; and they were forbidden to act as tutors to any person, or curators to any man's estate, or proctors in the cause of other men. The general principle was to exclude them from those relations, agencies, and engagements, which would divert their minds from that which was to be the sole object of pursuit—*A. Barnes.*

Ver. 9. *Lead.* Like Hannibal, whom Livy says was first in battle and last out of it.

Ver. 10. *Peace.* When Alexander besieged a city, he sent an herald into it with burning torch in hand, to proclaim that if any man would repair and submit to him while the torch was burning, he should be saved; otherwise they might expect nothing but fire and sword. Tamerlane, when he came against any place, first hung out a white flag of grace, then a red, and lastly a black flag, to show that now there was no hope of mercy.—*Trapp.*

## CHAPTER XXI.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The reason for grouping these five laws, apparently so different from one another, as well as for attaching them to the previous regulations is found in the desire to bring out distinctly the sacredness of life and of personal rights from every point of view, and impress it upon the covenant nation.—(*Keil*).

**Vers. 1-9. Expiation of unknown murder.** *Lying*, fallen, then lying (Jud. iii. 25). *Ver. 2. Elders*. Representing citizens. *Judges*. Administrators of right. *City*. The nearest responsible for cleansing rites. The heifer, which had done no work, strong and of full growth, not ceremonially profaned by human use (*cf.* Ex. xx. 25), had to die instead of the murderer who could not be found. *Ver. 4. Rough*. A valley through which water constantly flowed, suitable for cleansing. *Eared*. Neither ploughed nor sown. *Ver. 5. Priest*. Whom Jehovah had chosen to serve Him, was present, not to conduct the affair but to see that the rite was duly performed and accredit it when done so. *Ver. 6. Wash*. A symbolic act declaring innocence and repudiating connection with the crime. *Ver. 7. Answer* for all the people. *Merciful*. Be propitiated towards us; *lit.*, cover this guilt (Lev. i. 4). *Blood*, *i.e.*, bloodshed; the murder forgiven.

**Ver. 10-14. A Captive Wife.** Customary in ancient war for the victor to make a female captive a slave. Moses checks severities and shows superior treatment. *Shave, pare, lit.*, prepare, by cutting her nails to proper size and form. (2 Sam. xix. 25.) Both customary signs of purification (cutting the hair *cf.* Lev. xiv. 8; Num. viii. 7). Symbols of passing out of the state of a slave into reception of fellowship with the covenant nation. This obvious by her laying aside prisoner's clothes.—*Keil*. *Bewail*. This prescribed from motives of humanity that the woman might have time and leisure to detach her affections from their natural ties and prepare her mind for new ones.—*Speak. Com.* *Merchandize, lit.*, treat her with constraint, or as a slave. *Humbled*, <sup>1</sup> n taking her captive and then refusing the place and honour of a wife.

**Vers. 15-17. The Right of the Firstborn.** If a man had two wives, one beloved the other *hated*, loved less (*cf.* Leah and Rachel, wives of Jacob), the firstborn by the hated one must be treated as such. In the division of property he must have *double* (ver. 17), a portion equal to that of two; consequently the firstborn inherited twice as much as the other sons. Paternal authority could set aside these rights on just grounds (Gen. xxvii. 33), but must not do so from mere partiality.

**Ver. 18-21. Punishment of a disobedient son.** *Rebellious* whom milder measures failed to reclaim. *Elders*, as magistrates of a domestic kind, received the accusation of parents and upheld their authority; but prevented private acts of injustice. *Gate*. He was stoned by all the men of the town and treated as a blasphemer. Rebellion against parental authority struck at the social fabric and must be severely punished.

**Vers. 22, 23. Burial of those hanged.** *Sin, lit.*, a right of death; *i.e.*, capital offence. *Hanged*, a curse of God, inflicted by God. *Remain*, the preceding command "to put away evil," must now be observed. *Defiled* by exposing the corpse, especially the body of one guilty of such a crime as to deserve this fate (*cf.* Gal. iii. 13).

## UNKNOWN CRIME.—Verses 1-9.

Preceding laws indicate vigorous and effectual punishment of wilful murder. But if the murderer escaped they were not free, and the land was not unpolled. A great ceremony was appointed to put away guilt and express detestation and innocence.

**I. The criminal escaping.** "Not known who hath slain him." Crime may be committed in darkness and concealment. Men may evade laws most vigilant and severe, and think they can escape; but God's providence brings dark deeds to light, and strange things have led to the detection of guilt. The earth may disclose her blood (Isa. xxvi. 21) in time; if not, the future will reveal the righteous judgment of God when that which is past will be required (Eccles. iii. 15).

**II. The community responsible for his crime.** Blame is attached to Israel in some form or other, and they had to cleanse themselves. Society is bound

together for mutual help and good government. We are responsible not only for what we can *do*, but for what we can *prevent*. We must not only reform abuses and remove grievances, but prevent evils. Many among us are physically and morally dead. Have we done what we could to prevent death or restore to life? Is not our indifference a crime in the sight of God? "These ought ye to have done and not leave the other undone."

**III. The whole community should endeavour to prevent crime.** A sense of responsibility should quicken its action. Immorality and outrages drive away capital, create discontent and insecurity. There must be no impunity of murder, no impunity of any public crime. All classes of the community are concerned. Elders, judges, and priests should be anxious for public purity. Society, with its governors and laws; governors commissioned from heaven, and laws rooted in the revealed will of God; not only claim, but enforce obedience. The land must be purged from blood by public confession, prayer, and righteous conduct. "So shalt thou purge away the guilt," etc.

### EXPIATION OF UNKNOWN MURDER.

The sanctity of human life is still the leading thought, and when a corpse is found "lying in the field and it be not known who hath slain him," the land is regarded as guilty before God (verse 8) until a solemn rite of expiation be gone through. Verses 1-9 of this chapter prescribe the mode and form of this expiation, which, from the nature of the case, could take place only when the people were settled in Canaan, and so is prescribed first in Deuteronomy.—*Speak Com.*

**I. The imputed guilt of murder.** The law increased the horror of the crime. The administrators of law measured the distance from the slain man to the nearest city, and laid upon it the duty of expiation. A sense of guilt fills all classes of the community, and the people by their representatives cleanse themselves by appointed rites.

**II. The solemn expiation of imputed guilt.** When crime cannot be traced to its origin—when it is committed in open day and in defiance of law; it is most humiliating. All must purge themselves from suspicion and connivance. "Be not partakers of other men's sins." 1. *By animal sacrifice.* An heifer strong and vigorous, unaccustomed to the yoke and not profaned by labour had to be killed. 2. *By public confession.* The elders by a significant act repudiated the charge of public guiltiness and confessed their innocence. 3. *By direct intercession.* Mercy was implored for the cities and the nation. We have great need to cry to God for our land filled with iniquity and stained with guilt. "Be merciful O Lord to Thy people Israel" (v. 8).

**The important lessons of this expiation.** The ceremony was public, impressive and admonitory. 1. *The extreme guilt of murder.* The people were to dread blood which defiled the hands which shed it. "Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean" (Isa. i. 15, 16); and crime which polluted the land in which it was committed. 2. *The necessity of atonement for guilt.* The crime was not passed in silence. The people were not permitted to be unconcerned. Justice must be done and satisfaction given. 3. *The provision made by God for the pardon of guilt.* Many think this is a symbol of atonement in Christ, to whom our guilt was imputed and in whom we receive pardon and peace. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."



GOD'S VALUE OF INDIVIDUAL LIFE.—*Verses 1-9.*

"This narrative," says one, "sets forth the preciousness of human life in the sight of God." Dr. Jamieson believes this singular statute concerning homicide is far superior to what is found in the criminal code of any other ancient nation, and is undoubtedly the origin or germ of the modern coroners' inquests. (*Cf. Com. in loco.*)

**I. Discovered in the loss of one man.** Only one missing! But God counts men as well as stars, and "gathers one by one." Ancient philosophy and modern socialism overlook personality, and legislate for men in a mass. The individual exists only for the race, has no rights, and becomes a tool or slave of society. Christianity does not belittle man, but recognises and renews individuals, exalts them to responsibility, and appeals to them for right. "Adam, where art thou?"

**II. Discovered in the injury to one man.** One man was missing, but he was murdered. His blood, like that of Abel, was crying for justice. God's image was defaced in humanity. Society was wounded in one of its members. An enquiry was demanded, and the reproach must be wiped away.

**III. Discovered in the interest which the community should take in one man.** "Am I my brother's keeper?" Formerly heavy fines were inflicted on districts to prevent the murder of Danes and Normans by exasperated Englishmen. We are members one of another; related one to another, and none of us can turn away like Cain.

**IV. Discovered in the provision made for every man's salvation.** Christ died for one and for all. He is not willing that any should perish. It is not the will of God "that *one* of these little ones should perish." "If one sheep goes astray, the ninety and nine are left by the shepherd. He seeks the one that is lost, and its restoration brings greater joy than over all the remainder." "Dost thou believe?"

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 4. The place where the remembrance of blood is, is not suited for cultivation and joy, but for sorrow and awe, and penitential desolation; it is an *Aceldama*!—*Wordsworth*. The spot of ground on which the sacrifice was made must be *uncultivated*, because it was to be a sacrifice to make atonement for the murder, and consequently would *pollute* the land. This regulation was calculated (1) to keep murder in abhorrence, (2) to make the magistrates alert in their office, that delinquents might be discovered and punished, and that public expense saved.—*A. Clarke*.

Vers. 1-9. *Expiating unknown murder.* We shall endeavour—I. To explain the ordinance. In doing this we must notice—1. Its general design. God intended by this law (1) to prevent the commission of murder; (2) to provide means for removing guilt from His land. 2. Its particular provisions: the victim, the death, the place; the protestations and petitions of the elders. II. To point out some lessons which may be learned from it. 1. The importance of preventing or punishing sin. 2. The comfort of a good conscience. 3. The efficacy of united faith and prayer.—*C. Simeon*.

THE CAPTIVE WOMAN.—*Verses 10-14.*

When a female was taken from surrounding nations and not of the Canaanites and the victor, captivated by her beauty, contemplated marriage, a month was allowed to elapse, that she might bewail the loss of parents and become reconciled to her altered condition. Learn from this—

**I. The Divine protection of woman.** She was allowed to mourn, not to be abused, and might be set at liberty or become the wife of a Jew. The oppression of woman has been a crying evil in all countries. In the Old Testament we have hints concerning her equality, dignity and influence. But Christianity has exalted her to her lawful position as “the help meet” of man.

**II. The mitigating power of love.** Even in war woman may captivate by beauty and relieve by compassion. Man must control unlawful passion and defend the helpless. “Love rules the court and the camp,” removes mighty evils and wins great victories.

“What love can do, that dares love attempt.”—*Shakespeare.*

**II. The consummation of honourable marriage.** “She shall be thy wife,” not through lust but real love. “Marriage has always been the conclusion of love,” said Napoleon. Men should not be drifted into marriage, nor enter it with sordid motives. Mutual society, help and comfort, both in prosperity and adversity, is the chief end of marriage. “Marriage is honourable,” etc.

## DIGNITY AND NEEDFUL DISCIPLINE.

The captured slave had prospects of conjugal union. But time was to intervene, natural feeling respected, and the contemplated elevation gained by lawful steps.

**I. Prospective elevation.** A higher life and real dignity were before her. From a slave, mere property, she could become a Jewish mistress, invested with inalienated rights and shielded by sacred law. God's providence opens wonderful prospects to meanest subjects and elevates them to rank and dignity. Woman's creation indicates the benevolent purpose of God. She is not given for grovelling and selfish ends, which many philosophers and some professed Christians declare to be the chief design of her existence. Christianity elevates her to equal spiritual dignity, to be the mental and moral companion with man. She has yet to bless our homes, enrich our literature and rule our empires.

**II. Needful discipline and delay.** Delay often required, for haste in this matter is risky. Early marriage a curse. “Married in haste repent at leisure.”

1. *In kindness to the woman.* She was to receive considerate treatment. Incidents of war no excuse for undue licence. Kindness must be shown to all placed at our mercy. “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence.”
2. *As a test to the man.* Love cools and men become indifferent. This measure calculated to test the feeling. “If no delight in her, let her go whither she will.”

THE RIGHTS OF PRIMOGENITURE.—*Verses 15-17.*

Moses did not originate these rights, but recognised them, since he found them pre-existing in the general social system of the East. Paternal authority could set aside these rights on just grounds (Gen. xxvii. 33), but is forbidden here to do so from mere partiality.—*Sp. Com.*

**I. The rights of primogeniture defined.** "A double portion of all that he hath." As head of the family, the eldest son would be put into power and privilege, be heir of his father's rank and wealth. He was not to be limited in his allowance, nor deposed from his authority. The Divine Ruler entrusts him with possessions and entails them by his will.

**II. The rights of primogeniture upheld.** Individual preferences and partialities are not to set aside the rights of the firstborn. 1. *Rights upheld through successive marriage.* When an Israelite had two wives together or in succession, one might be loved and the other hated (ver. 15). God might tolerate polygamy, but right must be upheld. 2. *Rights upheld against human partiality.* The influence of the second wife was later and more permanent. Justice must not bend to personal like or dislike. Amid divided affections and divided authority, God and not caprice must rule. 3. *Rights upheld by Divine injunction.* Man is changeable; entails discord, feud and litigation in his family; but God is just and impartial. He will protect our rights and vindicate our character. "He shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born" (ver. 17).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 10-14. These regulations given 1. as a protest against common crimes in war. 2. As a check to unbridled passion. 3. As a protection to the defenceless. "Compare the Mosaic regulations concerning female slaves with the universal and abominable licentiousness of every heathen nation in their intercourse with slaves. Do not such regulations, at that early period, in an Asiatic nation, bespeak a wisdom and benevolence far superior to a mere human legislator?"—*Graves*.

Vers. 15-17. *Mischief of home partiality.* 1. In the family itself—jealousy, strife and confusion. 2. In

the distribution of property. Interest of some consulted to the detriment of others. Bitterness created and parental honour despised. "*The right of the first-born.* I. Consider the circumstances implied here. The first wife dead; her children living. She is forgotten in a new love. Her children slighted. The second wife living and loved. Her children take the chief place in the father's love. II. Consider the Divine rule. The first-born not to lose their place through their mother's fault, or their father's new affection. Learn—Justice to rule over fatherly caprice. This old law needs often to be remembered."—*Biblical Museum*.

#### THE REBELLIOUS SON.—Verses 18-21.

In former verses parents were urged to be careful of the rights of children; now very suitably children must not forget their duty and withhold their respect from parents. But here is a common case, a sad picture of a rebellious son.

**I. Parental authority defied.** Young persons become wayward and self-willed. Domestic life loses its attraction, home is a prison, and unlawful demands are urged. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Then follow disobedience, rebellion and exile.

**II. Parental authority failing in its purpose.** Parental government is a creation of God and should be upheld with prudence, affection and firmness. Parents err in capricious and tyrannical government. Hence sometimes reaction—the father a fanatic, the son an infidel; the father too severe, the



son immoral and profligate. Children may be spoiled, disheartened and provoked. "My father treats me like a brute," was the saying of a poor bright boy. But children fail in obedience and filial duty, bring dishonour and disgrace to parents. Wild sons become a father's burden and a mother's grief (Prov. x. 1). Home government restrains not, parental discipline fails. Fathers like Howard in the lazaretto at Venice, and David in the palace, exclaim, "Oh, my son, my son!"

**III. Parental authority upheld by the nation.** A wicked son is a peril to society. Rebellion is considered a public crime, not a private wrong. Roman laws were severe against rebellious children; Athenians pronounced worthy of death those who beat their parents or suffered them to want in old age, and in China incorrigible children are delivered up to the magistrates. The law must be honoured and upheld. The State cannot sacrifice its authority and interests to drunkards and criminals.

### ACCURSED OF GOD.—*Verses 22, 23.*

When a criminal was put to death and hanged on a tree, his body was not to remain exposed all night, but buried the same day. He died under the curse of God, and the land was not to be defiled by his exposure.

**I. Hanging a disgraceful punishment.** The body was exposed to insult and assault. Shameful deeds were kept in public memory, and the dead was a spectacle to the world. It was only inflicted on most infamous offenders. Cicero calls it a nameless wickedness. Its pain and disgrace were extreme.

**II. Hanging a defilement of the land.** "That thy land be not defiled." The vices of the living and the bodies of the dead defiled the land (Num. 35, 34). 1. *Physically* it would be defiled. In the hot climate its decomposition would injure the health and peril the life of others. 2. *Morally*, as the land of Jehovah, it would be polluted. Remembrance of crime would harden the heart and breed familiarity. Hence—

**III. Hanging a warning to others.** The punishment was designed to deter others. They *saw* the terrible consequences of guilt. Alas! "hanging is no warning," and men leave the very gibbet or the gallows to commit their crimes.

**IV. Hanging, a type of the death of Christ.** The apostle distinctly refers to this in illustration of the shame and curse of the crucifixion. We were guilty and deserved death. Christ was put to "an open shame," slain, and "hanged on a tree" (Acts v. 35). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made (having become) a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). 1. He became our substitute. 2. He was buried in the evening (Jno. xix. 31). 3. As the land was cleansed by removal of curse, so the conscience and the Church purified by Christ.

### THE ACCURSED TREE.

**I. A shameful death awaits abominable crime.** "Worthy of death" *lit.*, if there be on a man a right of death, "he was hanged upon a tree."

**II. Public ignominy expressed in this shameful death.** Penalty for crime, detestation of the perpetrator and the curse of God.

**III. The desirability of taking away the memory of this shame.** "He shall

not remain all night," take him down from the tree and bury him; blot out his name and remove the curse.

**IV. Christ alone removes the curse.** The best of men treated as one of the vilest, died the just for the unjust, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 20, 21. *The connection of gluttony and drunkenness.* Both enslave the body, degrade the soul and abuse the gifts of God. "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." (Prov. xxiii. 20, 21). Matthew Henry's note is suggestive "He (impious son) is particularly supposed to be a drunkard or a glutton. This intimates either 1. that his parents did in a particular manner warn him against these sins, and therefore in these instances there was plain evidence he did not obey their voice. Lemuel had this charge from his mother (Prov. xxxi. 4). Note in the education of children, great care should be taken to suppress all inclinations to drunkenness, and to keep them out of the way of temptations to them; in order hereunto they should be possessed betimes with a dread and detestation of these beastly sins, and taught betimes to deny themselves. Or 2.—That being a glutton and a drunkard was the cause of his insolence

and obstinacy to his parents. Note—Nothing draws men into all kind of wickedness and hardens them to it, more certainly and fatally than drunkenness does. When men take to drink they forget the law (Prov. xxxi. 5), even that fundamental law of honouring parents."

Vers. 22, 23. *Hangeth.* 1. The world's judgment. 2. The law's penalty. 3. Christ's treatment. "The law which required this answered all the ends of public justice, exposed the shame and infamy of the conduct, but did not put to torture the feelings of humanity by requiring a *perpetual* exhibition of a human being, a slow prey to the most loathsome process of putrefaction. How excellent are all these laws! How wonderfully well calculated to repress crimes by shewing the enormity of sin! It is worthy of remark, that in the infliction of punishment, prescribed by the Mosaic law, we ever find that *Mercy* walks hand in hand with *Judgment*.—A. Clarke.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER. XXI.

Vers. 1-7. *One slain.*

"Other sins ou'y speak; murder shrieks out:  
The element of water moistens the earth,  
But blood mounts upward."—J. Webster.

Vers. 10-14. *Beautiful woman.* In great crises it is woman's special lot to suffer our misfortunes.—*Napoleon I.*

"The artillery of her eye."—A. Cowley.

Ver. 12. *Head.* The hair is one of the finest ornaments women have. Of old, virgins used to wear it loose, except when they were in mourning.—*Luther.*

Vers. 15-17. *Inherit.* Education is of infinitely more importance to a son than the patrimony of his ancestors, or thousands of gold and silver. The latter is enjoyed in time only; the former goes with him into eternity.—*Dr. Davies.*

Ver. 18. *Son.*

"Unhappy is the son  
Who to his parents pays no ministry."  
*Euripides.*

*Stubborn.* I never saw so much essence of devil put into so small a vessel.—*Foster.*

Ver. 20. *Glutton.* A glutton will defend his food like a hero.—*Napoleon I. Drunkard.* All the crimes on earth do not destroy so many of the human race, nor alienate so much property, as drunkenness.—*Bacon.*

Ver. 21. *Stone him.* The curse pronounced on Mount Ebal against him that setteth light by his father or his mother, still hovers around the rebellious child on his pathway through life, and the character developed by dis-

obedience at home provokes in the world outside assault and revenge, quarrels and death.—*Fred. Perry.*

Vers. 22, 23. *Death.* Justice proportions the smart to the fault; so that we may behold the greatness of the offence in the fitness of the punishment.—*W. Secker.*

“Murder may pass unpunished for a time,  
But tardy justice will o’ertake the crime.”  
*Dryden.*

## CHAPTER XXII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—The cases stated and provided for in vers. 1-12 seem selected by way of example, and belong, according to our notions, rather to ethics than to law. It is noteworthy that no penalty is annexed to the breach of these regulations. No doubt it would be the duty of the “officers” (vers. 16-18) and the elders in the several cities to enforce their observance.—*Speak. Com.*

Vers. 1-4. *Humanity to neighbours.* This is an expansion of Ex. xxiii. 4, 5. A stray sheep, ox or ass to be taken to the owner. If owner unknown or lived at a distance, finder must take it to his own farm until sought for. A fallen ox (ver. 4), unable to carry its burden, to be helped up. *Hide thyself*, excusing or refusing help.

Ver. 5. *Apparel of sex.* *Pertaineth* not only dress, but arms, domestic and other utensils (cf. Ex. xxii. 6; Lev. xi. 32; xiii. 49). This designed to oppose idolatrous practices and to prevent licentious conduct.

Vers. 6, 7. *Birds' nests.* *Chance* often met with by travellers. Affectionate relation between parent and young to be sacred. Wisdom and humanity in this precept. *Prolong* (Ex. xx. 12).

Ver. 8. *House building.* Roofs were flat and used for various purposes (Jos. ii. 6; 2 Sam. xii. 2; Acts x. 9.) Human life was not to be endangered through any neglect of protection.

Vers. 9-12. *Mixtures avoided.* Prohibitions against mixing together things which are separated in God's creation, consisting partly of a verbal repetition of Lev. xix. 19. To this is appended in verse 12 the law concerning the tassels upon the hem of the upper garment (Num. xv. 37), which were to remind the Israelites of their calling to walk before the Lord in faithful fulfilment of his commandments.—*Keil.*

Vers. 13-22. *Laws of chastity.* Designed to foster purity and fidelity in relation to the sexes, and to protect females from malice and violence. *Chastise* (ver. 18) with stripes not exceeding forty in number. *Amerce* (F. *a* at; *merci*, mercy; Lat., *merces*, wages, penalty) punish by pecuniary penalty. *Shekels* paid to the father against whom the slander was made as head of the wife's family. The amount twice as much as that paid by a seducer (ver. 29).

Vers. 22-30. *Laws of marriage.* Adulterers were both to be put to death (ver. 22). *Betrothed* in the city and with her consent (cried not, ver. 24), both stoned. If found in a field (vers. 25-27), and she was forced, the man only died, as the only criminal. *Not betrothed* (ver. 28), a fine for undue liberty and completion of marriage without divorce. Incest (ver. 30) prohibited in repetition of earlier law (cf. Lev. xviii. 8; xx. 11; 1 Cor. v. 1) to form a close.



RESTORATION OF STRAY CATTLE AND LOST GOODS.—*Verses 1-4.*

Moses urges right action in manifold relations of national life, and teaches Israel to regard all arrangements of God as sacred. They were never to cherish any bitterness or hostility towards a neighbour, but restore stray animals and lost goods.

**I. An indication of God's Providence.** "Doth God care for oxen?" Yes; and observes them go astray, or fall beneath their heavy burden. He made and preserves them. He legislates for them, and our treatment of them is reverence or disobedience to His command. "Thou shalt not see," etc.

**II. An opportunity of neighbourly kindness.** "Thy brother" comprehends relatives, neighbours, strangers, and enemies even (Ex. xxiii. 4). The property of any person which is in danger should be protected and restored. Love should rule in all actions, and daily incidents afford the chance of displaying it. In trivial circumstances we may learn to forgive injury, love enemies, and do good for evil. 1. *Kindness regardless of trouble.* "If thy brother be not nigh unto thee, and if thou know him not," seek him out and find him if possible. 2. *Kindness regardless of expense.* If really unable to find the owner, feed and keep it for a time at thine own expense. "Then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it." If such care must be taken for the ox, what great anxiety should we display for the temporal and spiritual welfare of our neighbour himself.

**III. An expression of humanity.** "Thou shalt not hide thyself." Indifference or joy in the misfortune would be cruelty to dumb creatures and a violation of the common rights of humanity. 1. *In restoring the lost.* Cattle easily go astray and wander over the fence and from the fold. If seen they must be brought back and not hidden away. 2. *In helping up the fallen.* The ass illtreated and overladen may fall down through rough or slippery roads. Pity must prompt a helping hand. "Thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again." Thus common justice and charity are taught by the law of nature and enforced by the law of Moses. Principles which anticipate the gospel and embody themselves in one of its grandest precepts, "Love your enemies."

INTERCHANGE OF APPAREL.—*Verse 5.*

Not only was property to be held sacred, but the distinction of sexes also, by clothing suitable to each sex. A woman was not to put on a man's clothing, nor a man a woman's. This would be—

**I. A display of indecent conduct.** The putting on of the apparel of the one sex by the other is an outrage of ordinary decency. 1. *In common life.* Unbecoming levity is often seen. Modesty is the guard of female virtue and the charm of social life. 2. *In divine worship.* The custom of changing attire was prevalent in idolatrous worship. The sexes of heathen deities were often confounded and the worshippers endeavoured to please them by attiring like a particular god. This is forbidden to Israel.

**II. A destruction of natural distinction.** God created them male and female. This natural distinction should be preserved in manners and dress; but is destroyed when women forget their sex and men their decorum (1 Cor. ii. 3-9).

**III. An abomination to God.** "All that do so are abomination unto the Lord." The habit defaces the natural image of God in man; opens up the way to impudence, licentiousness and deception. These evils are detestable to God. For man and woman God has given a standard of dress and life.

#### TAKE CARE OF BIRDS.—*Verses 6, 7.*

A bird's nest seems a trifling thing to notice, but the majestic and the minute are equally under Divine care. Notice—

**I. The wisdom of the precept.** Birds have important uses in the economy of nature. Extirpation of any species, edible or ravenous, especially in a land like Palestine would be a serious evil. The vulture which destroys putrid bodies and the ibis which devours snakes have been of service to society. The owl keeps down the mice, and sparrows, the caterpillar. God has made nothing in vain. His wisdom and goodness rule over all.

**II. The humanity of the Precept.** To disturb the dam while sitting would rob her of her young and her liberty. It would be wanton destruction and cruelty. The tiniest birds are protected by God. Cowper would make no man his friend who would tread even upon a worm. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

**III. The benefit of the Precept.** Spare the birds and thou shalt prolong thine own days. Kindness to man and beast will elevate personal character, check destructive tendencies, and please God. Those who show mercy shall reap mercy. In all circumstances benevolence to the creature and obedience to the Creator will increase the happiness of life, and meet with the seal of Heaven.

#### THE TREATMENT OF BIRD'S NESTS.

**I. The minuteness** of divine law is here very beautifully illustrated. God does not finish great breadths of work and leave the details to be filled by other hands. He who guards planets, guards bird's nests, though in the latter case His defence may be broken down by wanton hands. Our own life to be exact in *detail*. Not enough to keep the law in great aspects which appeal to the public eye, and by keeping which a reputation is sometimes unjustly gained, but by attention to minute and hardly discernable features of character which indicate the real quality of the man. **II. The beneficence** of divine law is illustrated by protection of bird's nests. God kind in little as well as great things. Love is one whether shown in redemption of the race, in numbering hairs of our head, ordering our steps or giving His beloved sleep. All law beneficent; the law of restriction as well as liberty. Man to have dominion over fowls of the air, but dominion to be exercised in mercy. Power uncontrolled by kindness becomes despotism. Power belongs to God—unto God also belongs mercy; this is completeness of dominion, not only a hand to rule, but a heart to love. **III.** A prohibition of this kind shows that there is a right and wrong in *everything*. A right way of appropriating bird's nests and a way equally wrong. Morality goes down to every root and fibre of life. In offering a salutation, opening a door, uttering a wish, writing a letter, in every possible exercise of thought and power. **IV.** The *principle* of the prohibition admits of wide application in life. He who wantonly destroys a bird's nest, may one day cruelly break up a child's home. We cannot stop wantonness when we please. Little tyrannies of childhood explain the great despotisms of mature life.

Kindness an influence that penetrates the whole life, having manifold expression, upward, downward, and laterally, touching all human beings, all inferiors and dependants, and every harmless and defenceless life. V. Beware of the possibility of being merely *pedantic* in feeling. A man may be careful of his horse and cruel to his servant. Some would not on any account break up a bird's nest, yet would allow a poor relation to die of hunger. What with all carefulness for dumb animals, if we think little of breaking a human heart by sternness or neglect! VI. Kindness to the *lower* should become still tenderer to the *higher*. This, Christ's argument in bidding us behold the fowls of the air, that in their life we may see our Father's kindness. "Are ye not much better than they?" If careful for cattle, "How much is a man better than a sheep?" How does the case stand with us, who have completer inheritance of liberty, who have passed from the latter to the *spirit*? We are no longer true, noble and kind, because of literal direction guarded by solemn sanctions, but because the Holy Ghost has sanctified us, and made our hearts his dwelling place.—*Dr. Parker.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1-3. *Lost property restored.* An ass, an ox, and raiment samples of the property of an Israelite. If lost these must be restored. 1. To preserve them. 2. To show kindly feeling towards a neighbour. Hence—I. Restoration a duty demanded by a brother and urged by God. II. Neglect to restore a sin. A species of theft, "Thou shalt not steal." The *general duty of stopping stray animals and restoring them to friendly owners* is expressly taught here.

Ver. 5. *Sex distinguished.* 1. By nature. 2. By dress. 3. By manners. 4. By conduct. "This is a precept against boldness and effrontery in woman; and against effeminacy in man. It is a precept against all infraction of those laws which God has established at the creation of man and of woman out of man; and renewed and reinforced in the incarnation of Christ. It is a precept against all confusion of attire of men and women, especially in the Church of God."—*Wordsworth.*

#### ON MAKING BATTLEMENTS.—*Verse 8.*

This is an extraordinary statement. May not a man please himself in building a house which he is able to pay for? God says not, and society in many particulars confirmed the word. There is nothing which a man may do merely to please himself. We are surrounded by other people, and it is one of the most gracious appointments of Providence that we are obliged to consider the effect of our movements upon our fellow-creatures. Thus self will is limited, our character strengthened, and all that is highest in friendship purified and strengthened. It is easy to see how objections to the appointment of the text might arise. For example:—1. "My neighbour will call upon me only now and then; why should I make a permanent arrangement to meet an exceptional circumstance?" We are to build for exceptional circumstances. The average temperature of the year may be mild, wind low and rains gentle; yet we build houses not for such averages, but for the possibility of severe trials. Vessels are not made by the shipbuilder for smooth waters and quiet days, but for the roughest billows and fiercest winds. Our neighbours' visits may be uncertain, yet their very uncertainty constitutes demand for permanent arrangement. Be prepared for crises, expect the unexpected, and be sure of the uncertain. He who is so defended for his neighbour's sake will be equal to the



severest emergencies of life. 2. "But will it not be time enough to build the battlement when anything like danger is in prospect?" No. Life is regulated by the doctrine that prevention is better than cure. We are not at liberty to try first whether people will fall off the roof. Life too short and valuable to justify such experiments. He who prevents the loss of life saves it. Preventive ministries of life are not so heroic and impressive as those of a more affirmative kind, yet they are most acceptable to God. Prevent your boy from becoming a drunkard, it is better than saving him from extremest dissipation, though not so imposing before society. 3. "But ought not men to be able to take care of themselves when walking on the roof of a house without our guarding them as if they were little children?" No. We are to study the interests of the weakest men. This is the principle of Christianity. "If eating flesh or drinking wine," etc. "Him that is weak in the faith receive," etc. "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." The house may be strong, but if wanting the battlement of grace above it, it is wanting in beauty which is pleasant to God's eye. You may be able to walk upon the roof without danger, another may not have the same steadiness of head and firmness of foot. It is for that other man you are to regulate your domestic arrangements. "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

See the Christian application of this. If we are to build a house as not to endanger the men who visit us, are we to build a *life* which may be to others snares of destruction? Is not a battlement around our conduct? Are habits to be formed without reference to social influence? Children are looking at us, strangers take account of our ways, and though we may be proud of our strength, they may be lured from righteousness by that licentiousness which we call liberty.

Has God given directions for building a house and forgotten to give instructions for the building of a *life*? Is it like Him to do the little and forget the great? Is He not more careful about the *tenant* than about the house? Instructions for life-building abound. "Wisdom is the principal thing," etc. Go to the Book with earnest desire to discover the way of salvation, the secret of vital growth, and God will teach.—*The City Temple*. Vol. III.

#### RELIGIOUS ÆSTHETICS.—*Verses 9-11.*

As "a peculiar people" God designed that they should walk worthy of their high vocation. No intermingling allowed with heathen character and practices. They and even their cattle were stamped with the mark of separation. By forbidding the intermingling of seeds, animals and garments, God taught the great lesson of *spiritual separation*. That lesson has been written for our learning.

#### THE MIXED SEED.

"*The seed is the word.*" The Christian, faithful in his testimony to divine truth, is the sower. Whatever is opposed to this seed, foreign to it in character, arrests its fall into good ground, or obstructs its growth when rooted—is the mischievous seed of the wicked one—the seed of "tares" and choking "thorns." A teacher of truth in pulpit, Sabbath school, or in house to house visitation who seeks on the Sabbath to scatter the seed of the kingdom, but during the week is busy dealing out "words to no profit," has no more warrant to expect the prepared heart among secular hearers than the husbandman in expecting the culture and preparedness of his ground by the cultivation of chickweed.

## THE UNEQUAL YOKING.

*"Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together."* This illustrates the *intermingling of persons of diverse characters and tastes*. This intercourse is indispensable in certain relations. Men of all characters and orders have fellowship in different ways. It would not be desirable, if practicable, for the "children of light" to be separated outwardly from "the children of this world." Christ moved with crowds but had *fellowship* only with few, contact and intercourse with evil, but no communion with it. He met with men to teach, heal, comfort, and save, but the means He used were words of truth and acts of love. In Christ there were no unseemly and unequal yoking. The illustration refers also to *service*—the inviting of opposite characters and interests in a common cause. The ox being stronger than the ass, two evils ensue. The stronger drags aside the weaker, and the weaker impedes the progress of the stronger. Unequal yokes make bad ploughing and a crooked furrow. The loss is seen in waste of time, labour, and ground. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" In secular life two men united in partnership cannot prosper without agreement. Each seeks his own selfish ends or unrighteous progress at the sacrifice of principle. In spiritual life, when a Christian unites with any whose thoughts, tastes and habits differ from his own, how can they walk harmoniously. Any good to be done is done defectively or left undone. Otherwise it must be done separately; the ox unyoked and freed from encumbrance. The liberation happens in obedience to the Divine injunction, "*Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*"

## THE MIXED GARMENT.

*"Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together."* Many put on religion for particular days and special occasions. On Sabbath they are suitably and religiously attired; but other days of the week find them wearing a garment of coarser material and divers colours. A "linsey-woolsey" christianity is very popular. The practical, outward life of a Christian should harmonise with his spiritual hidden life, compared in Scripture to "fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness of the saints." Hence exhortations to "*keep his garments*, to hate the garment spotted by the flesh," to "*put off the old man with his deeds*, and put on the new man," etc. Christians are a peculiar people in God's estimation, and should be in that of the world by reason of moral character, their spiritual clothing. As "*a holy priesthood*" they should never put off their long priestly linen garments, but let them be "*for glory and beauty.*" A "*royal priesthood*" should evince its rank by "*royal apparel*," for they that wear soft raiment are in kings' houses. What a  *motive*  does this furnish for practical godliness. The priestly robe should be worn *always*, in all companies and in all times; should suit the home, the sanctuary, and the place of business. Whatever forbids my robe forbids my presence. "*Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost*," and "*what agreement hath the temple of God with idols.*" A *testing principle* is here. The question is not what is lawful for a Christian, but what is seemly, beautiful, and accordant with Divine taste. The God of glory is jealous for the glory of his children. He would have the outward correspond with the inward. "*Wherefore be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.*"—*The Study*, 1875.

THE MORAL AND THE POSITIVE IN THE DUTIES OF LIFE.—*Verse 11.*

On this verse we remark—I. That it exhibits a positive duty. Moral laws are of everlasting obligation; positive may be temporary and local in their existence. II. That as the inculcation of a positive duty, the precept of the text was not so binding upon the Jews as those duties which were wholly moral. III. That we who live under the gospel dispensation are not bound to observe this precept at all. We are not under law, but under grace. IV. That while we are under no manner of obligation to observe this precept in its literal meaning, still the moral principle which underlies that meaning, and which it was intended to illustrate, is as binding now as ever. It teaches us that we cannot “serve two masters;” “thou shalt have no other gods before me.”—*R. Harley, F.R.S.*

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 8. *Battlements.* 1. Danger in *places of common resort.* Roofs of houses much resorted to in cool of the evening. 2. Danger in *places of devotion.* They were used as an oratory or places of prayer. 3. Danger in *places of rest.* They were also slept on during the heat of summer. It is needful to have some parapet or fence to guard ourselves and others from falling down.

Ver. 9. *Divers seeds.* 1. To secure the best crop. By enjoining the best, unmixed seed, and by preventing one seed from destroying the other. 2. To forbid heathen customs. Heathens sowed barley with dried grapes, by which they signified that their vineyards were consecrated to Ceres and Bacchus. 3. To induce simple trust in God. By not sowing mixed seeds they would indicate faith in God's providence in seasons wet or dry. “The Church is God's vineyard (Is. v. 7; Jer. xii. 10; Mt. xxi. 33; Lu. xx. 15). It must not be sown with the tares of false doctrine, mingled with the good seed of the word.”—*Wordsworth.*

Ver. 10. *Plow.* Unequally yoked. 1. In the choice of companions. 2. In married life (2 Cor. vi. 14). 3. In Christian work. “The ass is lower than the ox, and when in a yoke together must bear the principal

weight, and that in a very painful position in the neck; his steps are unequal and his strength is inferior, which must occasion an irregular draught, and great oppression to both. The ass is a stubborn, rebellious, and in these countries a spirited creature; the ox, on the contrary, is gentle, tractable, and patient. Accepting this interpretation, it gives us another instance of that humanity which pervades the whole Mosaic code.”—*Cassell.*

Ver. 11. *Garment.* 1. Dress according to your station in life. Linen and wool may have been the apparel of priests and therefore forbidden to the people. 2. Dress not in imitation of the world. The garment may have been peculiar to the heathen priesthood and therefore a virtual condemnation of all idolatrous usages. “These laws were made to set forth how God abhorreth all mixtures in religion, and how carefully men should keep their minds from being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”—*Trapp.*

Ver. 12. *Fringes.* Tassels on the corners of the outer coat, or, according to some, tassels on the coverlet of the bed, which was tied to bed-posts for the sake of decency. Learn—1. Not to be ashamed of your religion however peculiar you may seem to be. Israel distinguished from other people by  
T



these things. 2. Not to forget the precepts of the word. Fringes reminded of particular occasions and precepts. "Speak unto Israel, bid them make fringes . . . throughout their generations . . . and it shall be unto them for a fringe, that ye may look upon it and remember all the

commandments of the Lord and do them ; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye used to go a whoring : that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God." (Num. xv. 38-40).

### PURITY AND FIDELITY IN LIFE.—*Verses 13-29.*

The regulations which follow might be imperatively needful in the *then* situation of the Israelites ; and yet it is not necessary that *we* should curiously and impertinently enquire into usages unknown to the language of civilization. So far was it from being unworthy of God to leave such things upon record, that the enactments must heighten our admiration of His wisdom and goodness in the management of a people so perverse and so given to regular passions.—*Jamieson.* We may thus arrange our matter—

**I. The slandered wife** (vers. 13-19). Chastity and fidelity should characterise married life. "Chastity is the band that holds together the sheaf of all holy affections and duties," says Vinet. This band may be broken and married life be a curse. A husband may question the virtue of his wife from malice or with justice. 1. *Accused maliciously.* He might take her to gratify lusts, then hate her, try to get rid of her, and bring her in bad repute. A declaration of innocence was made by parents before the elders, who were to send for her accuser. He was chastised bodily and forfeited the privilege of divorce. Slander is a crime of the highest nature, a species of murder which destroys reputation and character (Prov. xxv. 18). 2. *Accused justly* (vers. 20, 21). If the words were true and the girl had deceived, was not found to be a virgin, she was to be brought before the door of her father's house and stoned by the men of the city. She had committed fornication in her father's house and folly in Israel (ver. 21). (See Dinah, Gen. xxxiv. 7). Israel was a holy people by profession, and all uncleanness was folly.

**II. The unchaste wife.** Glancing at the preceding verses, we notice—1. *Unchaste in marriage* (vers. 20-22). Whoredom was a capital crime, treason to the great king, and punished with severity. 2. *Unchaste after marriage* (ver. 22). Adultery was a sin which could not be tolerated. Adulterers are as hateful as adulteresses (Lev. xx. 10). The man who acts treacherously against "the wife of his covenant" is as great a sinner as the woman who breaks the marriage bond (Mal. ii. 14-16). There is no respect of sexes with God.

**III. The seduced virgin.** Three cases are given. 1. *Betrothed virgin.* (a) *In the town* (vers. 23-24). Both of them, the man and the girl, were led out to the gate of the town and stoned. The girl because she had not cried for help, therefore consented to the deed ; the man because he had "humbled his neighbour's wife." (b) *In the field* (vers. 25-27). She called for help and could get none, hence not worthy of death. The man alone died. In solitude the enemy assaults, and our cry should be, "Help, Lord !" 2. *Unbetrothed virgin* (vers. 28-29). The man paid the father 50 shekels of silver, married the girl, and could not be divorced from her because he had humbled her. This was to prevent such vicious practices (*cf.* Ex. xx. 16-17.).

## DARK SPOTS IN SOCIAL LIFE.—Verses 13-30.

These are most delicate matters, but concern the welfare of society and not beneath Divine legislation. "Nor is it a better argument that the Scriptures were not written by inspiration of God to object that this passage, and others of a like nature, tend to corrupt the imagination, and will be abused by evil-disposed readers, than it is to say that the sun was not created by God, because its light *may* be abused by wicked men as an assistant in committing crimes which they have meditated."—*Horne*.

1. *Slander* (vers. 13-19). The slanderer is most despicable and most dangerous to society. "A false accusation is worse than death" (Eccles. xxvi. 5). Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have fallen by the edge of the tongue (Eccles. xxviii. 18).

"Slander lives upon succession ;

For ever housed where it once gets possession."—*Shakspeare*.

2. *Adultery* (vers. 20-22). Solomon paints the deadly snare of a strange woman with a master hand and exquisite fidelity (*cf.* Prov. vii. 6-23). The warning is not needless. "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." 3. *Rape* (vers. 25-27). Laws may be too lenient for such violence of women. Surely, if taking away life deserves punishment, this must be the murder of virtue, "a sin worthy of death." 4. *Fornication* (vers. 28, 29). To gratify lusts, some unrestrained by law human or divine, wound with keenest anguish, commit irreparable injury to body and soul. "But fornication and all uncleanness . . . let it not be once mentioned among you." 5. *Incest* (v. 30). Abominations like these abounded in Canaan, but must be destroyed in Israel (Deut. xxvii. 20). This is doubly guilty, for she is near of kin, and she is another person's wife (*cf.* Reuben with Bilhah, Gen. xxxv. 22 ; Absalom with his father's wives, 2 Sam. xvi. 20-23 ; 1 Kings ii. 17). This is a repetition of the law (Lev. xviii. 8 ; xx. 11). Line upon line, to preserve from sin and purify life. Our own laws might be more severe to check licentiousness and secure social purity.

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXII.

Vers. 1-4. *Ox and ass*. I am shocked at the thoughtless cruelty of many people, yet I did a thing once that has given me considerable uneasiness, and for which I reproached myself bitterly. As I was riding homeward I saw a waggon standing at a door, with three horses ; the two foremost were eating corn from bags at their noses ; but the third had dropped his on the ground and could not stoop to get any food. However, I rode on in absence of mind without assisting him. But when I had got nearly home I remembered what I had observed in my absence of mind, and felt extremely hurt at my neglect, and would have ridden back had I not thought the waggoner might have come out of the house and relieved

the horse. A man could not have had a better demand for getting off his horse than for such an act of humanity. It is by absence of mind that we omit many duties.—*R. Cecil*.

Ver. 5. *Garment*. A man ought in his clothes to conform something to those that he converses with, to the custom of the nation and the fashion that is decent and general to the occasion and his own condition ; for that is best that best suits one's calling, and the rank we live in.—*Feltham*.

"For the apparel oft proclaims the man."

—*Shakspeare*.

Vers. 6, 7. *Birds*. Of love need I  
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say anything? Who is there that has not watched the birds from St. Valentine's day onwards, through their courtships, weddings, lovers' quarrels, house buildings, welcoming of the small strangers, nursing the heirs and heiresses, and sending the young people forth into the world?—*Prof. G. Wilson.*

Ver. 8. *House.* Houses are built to live in and not to look on; therefore let use be preferred before uniformity, except where both may be had.—*Bacon.*

Ver. 9, 10. *Seeds.* Humanity

Is not a field where tares and thorns alone  
Are left to spring; good seed hath there been  
sown

With no inspiring hand. Sometimes the shoot  
Is choked with weeds, or withers on a stone;  
But in a kindly soil it strikes its root  
And flourisheth and bringeth forth abundant  
fruit.

—*Dr. Southey.*

Vers. 13-19. *Occasions of speech.* Slander is a vice impure in its source, dangerous in its effects, and sometimes irreparable in its consequences. It generally strikes three mortal blows—it wounds him who commits it, him

against whom it is committed, and him who knows that it is committed. It is tolerated in society only because almost every one has an unhappy inclination to commit it.—*Saurin.*

“To speak no slander; no, nor listen to it.”—*Tennyson.*

Vers. 20-30. *Virgin.* Agesilaus, king of Sparta, was a great lover of chastity. In his journeys he would never lodge in private houses where he might have the company of women; but ever lodged either in the temples or in the open fields, making all men witnesses of his modesty and chastity.

Vers. 25-27. *Rape.* The Lacedæmonian commonwealth was utterly ruined by a rape committed on the two daughters of Scedasus and Leuctra (*Trapp*). Publius Scipio Africanus, warring in Spain, took New Carthage by storm, at which time a beautiful and noble virgin fled to him for succour to preserve her chastity. He being but 24 years old, and in the heat of youth, hearing of it, would not suffer her to come into sight, for fear of falling into temptation himself, and, therefore, restored her safely to her father. Admirable example!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—From the sanctification of domestic relations, to which laws of marriage and chastity in the previous chapter pointed, Moses now proceeds to legislate for the purity of the congregation and the camp.

1-8. Rights of Citizenship in Israel. Forbidden to the mutilated in his sexual member (ver. 1). Mutilation practised among Gentiles, but unnatural in those made in God's image and chosen to be God's people (Lev. xxii. 24). *Bastard* (ver. 2). Offspring of incest and adultery, *gen.*—collective bodies of contemporaries (*cf.* Gen. xv. 16; Ex. i. 6); *tenth* complete number used in highest sense, and signifies an indefinite period. Ammonites and Moabites excluded. Perhaps reference to their incestuous origin (Gen. xix. 30-38). But they both combined against Israel without provocation; hired Balaam to curse, and brought upon themselves perpetual rejection (*cf.* Num. xxiv. 9; xxii. 5, 6). *Seek* (ver. 6). Invite them to friendship, nor care for their welfare (Ezra ix. 12; Jer. xxix. 7). Edomites and Egyptians had opposed (Num. xx. 18; Ex. xx. 5), but Israel were to be friendly with them and not forget former hospitality. *Third gen.* (ver. 8), *i.e.* the great grandchildren who had lived strangers in Israel might be incorporated.

9-14. Purity of the camp must be preserved in war. Wicked thing states in vers. 10-12 uncleanness of body; theft, violence, and sins common to life in camps (Jos. vi. 10, 18). Then



follow sanitary regulations to secure cleanliness of person and habits. The necessities of nature provided for outside the camp (vers. 12, 13). **Walk.** Fit for God's presence. **Unclean thing.** "Nakedness of anything"—nothing to be ashamed of; no want of reverence in not removing evil must be displayed.

**15-18. Toleration and non-toleration.** A slave running away from the tyranny of his master, not to be given up, but to dwell in the land (vers. 15-16). Prostitutes, male and female, descended from Israel not to be tolerated, *i.e.*, not allowed to give themselves up to prostitution as religious worship (vers. 17-18). *Dog* is figurative (*cf.* Rev. 22-15) and equivalent to the "Sodomite" of the verse preceding (*cf.* Mic. i. 7; Baruch vi. 43). *Speak. Com.*

**19-25. Theocratic rights of citizenship.** Of a brother (*i.e.*, countryman) an Israelite was not to take interest for money, food, or any goods lent to him. *Stranger*, not Israelites (*cf.* Ex. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv., 36, 37). Vows fulfilled without delay (*cf.* Ex. xxii. 29; Num. xxx. 2; Ecc. v. 4, 5). For general law of vows (*cf.* Lev. xxvii). Hunger might be satisfied in vineyards and cornfields of a neighbour, but nothing to be carried away in a vessel. **Pluck** (ver. 25 *cf.* Matt. xii. 1; Luke vi. 1). Right to pluck still recognised among Arabs.

### EXCLUDED FROM THE CONGREGATION.—*Verses 1-5.*

Everyone belonging to God's people or devoted to God's service should be as perfect as possible. "Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God" (Lev. xxi. 16-21). Five classes are mentioned as unfit to enter the congregation of the Lord.

**I. Mutilated persons are excluded** (ver. 1). Two kinds are specified.

1. *Eunuchs.* An ancient practice for priests of many heathen gods, especially of the Syrian goddess, to be eunuchs, and for parents in various ways to mutilate their children and train them for the service of the great. God's service requires soundness and purity. Sacrifices must be free from defect and blemish. Individuals in whom the Divine image was wilfully defaced were not qualified for office and association with God's people. 2. *Bastards.* Such spring from an order not natural and divine. Whether heathens or strangers, often styled harlots (Is. xxiii. 17, 18); or born before wedlock a stigma is attached to discourage disgraceful habits. These prohibitions literally and symbolically were suited for the Jewish Church—had reference only to its outward constitution, and passed away when the kingdom of God was established.

**II. Special nations are excluded** (ver 3). Ammon and Moab were for ever excluded. 1. *They neglected duty.* As allies or neighbouring states they brought no victuals into the camp, for which Israel would have paid them. 2. *They were hostile in proceedings.* Without provocation they opposed Israel and hired Balaam to curse them. The unmerciful will be excluded from the kingdom (Mat. xxi. 41-46). There can never be any "peace" or "prosperity" to enemies of God. A curse falls upon all who injure God's people, and they will forfeit His favour for ever. Balaam had to confess, "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee" (Num. xxiv. 9).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. 1. The privilege of intercourse with God and His people. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee." 2. The purity required for enjoyment of this privilege. The wrath

of man is made to praise God (Ps. xxxvi. 10.) All that are sinful and impure are excluded from heaven. There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth (Rev. xxi. 27).

Ver. 4. *Neglect.* Its guilt and danger.

Vers. 4-6. *Benevolence towards God's ancient people.* I. The duty of benevolence is general. 1. It is a duty. 2. It is a duty absolutely indispensable to our acceptance with God. II. Our special obligation to exercise it towards God's ancient people. 1. We are more indebted to them than to any other people under heaven. 2. The very blessings which we enjoy were taken from them that they might be transferred to us. 3. This very transfer of their blessings has been made to us for the express purpose that He might dispense them to that bereaved people in the hour of

their necessity. III. The more particular obligations which we have to exercise towards them at this time. Observe—1. The interest now felt in the Christian world for their restoration to God. 2. The stir which prevails among the Jews themselves. 3. The earnestness which God has given us in the actual commission of some. 4. The general voice of prophecy.—

*C. Simeon, M.A.*

Ver. 6. As God takes notice of the least courtesy showed to His people, even to a cup of water, to requite it, so He doth of the least discourtesy, even to a frown or a frump, to revenge it.—*Trapp.*

#### THE CURSE TURNED INTO A BLESSING.—*Verse 5.*

A divine law governs events which can never be changed. God can "curse the blessings of the wicked" (Mal. ii. 2), or turn their curse into blessings as here. Apply to other things—

1. *In persecution.* Often overruled for the triumph of God's people and the spread of God's cause. "The more I seek to blot out the name of Christ, the more legible it becomes; and whatever of Christ I thought to eradicate takes deeper root, and rises the higher in the hearts and lives of men.—*Diocletian.*" 2. *In labour.* What this would have been without sin we know not. The ground is "cursed" and we toil in the "sweat of the face" (Gen. iii. 17-19.) But the curse is blessed to physical health in the vigour and development of the body, to intellectual enjoyment, in the rest and recreation of mind, to the good of society, by promoting its interests and satisfying its wants. "Labour is the salt of life." 3. *In affliction,* which checks sin, weans from the world, brings to God, prepares and disciplines for future life. As fire refines gold, so affliction purifies men. Many can say, "chastisements are blessings in disguise; it is good for me that I have been afflicted." 4. *In sin.* This greatest curse, which brought death into both worlds, is made the occasion of the greatest blessing. God, in his infinite wisdom, redeems from sin and death; in Jesus Christ displays His love and magnifies His grace in the salvation of the sinner. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working."

#### THE EDMITE AND THE EGYPTIAN.—*Verses 7-8.*

Edomites refused permission for Israel to pass through the land, yet they were related to them by kindred, and must not be abhorred. "He is thy brother." In Egypt Israel were oppressed, yet in that land they had received benefits, and descendants in the third generation of both peoples might be naturalised. Learn—

I. That the tie of kindred must be respected. God has bound men in different social ties, and such ties should ever be held most sacred. "If there

be not a religious element in the relations of men," says Carlyle, "such relations are miserable and doomed to ruin." 1. In *the family*. Husbands and wives, sisters and brothers must love another. 2. In *the neighbourhood* he must feel the claims of others. Nothing can destroy this relationship. "There is a law of neighbourhood which does not leave a man perfectly master on his own ground."—*Burke*. 3. In *the country*. Our native country makes its impress on our character as its accent on our tongue. We must love and pray for our country.

**II. That hospitality must not be forgotten.** Israel had found a home in Egypt and received many gifts in coming out. Edom was not very friendly, but they had furnished Israel with victuals in their march. For these things they must be rewarded. 1. *Time must not obliterate remembrance of kindness.* Years had passed, but Israel must not forget their obligation. Gratitude must prompt generosity for special favours. "One good turn deserves another." 2. *Circumstances must not obliterate remembrance of kindness.* Israel had grown more prosperous and more powerful, but they were forbidden to revenge or "pay back an old grudge." No changes of time or place must alter disposition to do right. Our ill treatment in the past must "provoke to love," not to rancour, resentment and wrath. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good."

The shade by which my life was crossed,  
Which makes a desert in the mind,  
Has made me kindly with my kind.  
—*Tennyson*.

#### THE SANCTITY OF THE CAMP.—*Verses 9-14.*

Sanitary rules of great importance are given here. Simple, well adapted to the climate, and enforced by the highest motives.

**I. Cleanliness must be enforced.** This part of the ceremonial law was constantly enforced. In private and in public it is a religious duty; in war or in the camp special evils result from its neglect. "In thy filthiness is lewdness" (Ezek. xxiv. 13).

**II. Wickedness must be avoided.** "Keep thee from every wicked thing." Theft and violence are incident to camp life. Morals and religion are often relaxed in time of war. Outward cleanliness was only symbolic of that holiness for which God was training His people. "Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

**III. Purity is essential to success.** "To deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee" (ver. 14). Sin paralyses, frustrates and hinders all effort. In spiritual warfare, conquests are won by prayer and purity. Holiness is invincible "when the host goeth forth against the enemy."

#### GOD'S PRESENCE AN ARGUMENT FOR MORAL PURITY.—*Verses 12-14.*

If the presence of some earthly prince would put us on our guard and make us careful not to offend, how earnest should we be to put away every "unclean thing" when "God walketh in the midst of the camp."



**I. In daily life.** Outwardly "wash and be clean" in person and habits; inwardly in heart, character and conduct. "Outward cleanliness is inward purity," says the Talmud.

**II. In the domestic circle.** This was no mere typical cleanliness, but such as pertained to the person and dwelling of every Israelite, and which the Creator's laws of health require from all classes and ranks. It is a part of the system of the God of law, order and beauty. Dirty homes are repulsive and unhealthy—injurious to morals and social life. "Cleanse your persons and dwellings, else I shall never believe that you have cleansed your souls," said John Wesley.

**III. In the Christian Church.** God is specially in "the camp" of believers to work for deliverance and progress. The standard of piety must not be lowered. Every soldier must be holy and consistent, and the interests of the church constantly guarded. The Great King demands a clean camp and a purified army, that he may dwell there. "Thy camp shall be holy, that He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 9. *Keep thee.* Walk accurately, as carrying thy life in thy hand; for "the sword devoureth one as well as another" (2 Sam. ii. 25); it spares neither lord nor losel. Every soldier, therefore, should be a saint, ready pressed to meet the Lord, Who hath said, "I will be sanctified in all them that draw near unto Me" (Lev. x. 3).—*Trapp.*

*The soldier's bearing.* 1. The nature of this injunction. The true soldier of Israel to be honourable, self-controlled, chivalrous. 2. The reason of it. That Israel might be respected for character as well as courage. That by their virtues and successes God, their Lawgiver, might be honoured. 3. The application of it. Character of soldiers of Christ. Right methods for lawful ends.—*Bib. Museum.*

Ver. 13. *Unclean thing.* The charge to be clean. 1. From moral pollution (ver 9). 2. From ceremonial pollution. 3. From natural pollution (vers. 12-14).—*Mt. Henry.* Hereby God taught His people holy conversation, that they should keep themselves from iniquity as David did (Psa. xviii. 23)—that is, from such sins as either by their constitution, calling, company or custom, they are most prone to.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 14. *Conditions of victory.* 1. Purity of character. 2. The presence of God. 3. Rectitude of purpose. Then the enemy will be like the Egyptians. "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them" (Ex. xiv. 25).

#### SPECIAL LAWS.—Verses 15-18.

Israel were to be a terror to tyrants, a refuge for afflicted people and a representative of God. They were to protect the oppressed, but to sanction no whoredom.

**I. Fugitive slaves were allowed asylum.** The reference is not to idolaters, but to slaves who fled from a foreign country and from harsh treatment from an unjust master. 1. *They were protected from oppression.* "Thou shalt not deliver him unto his master." In Greece and Rome slaves were pursued by their masters, and if caught were branded with a red-hot iron. But a refugee was free, as in Britain now, the moment he sets his foot upon the soil. *They*

*were permitted to settle at pleasure.* Not merely protected but encouraged to reside where it was best for him, or where he might choose. Lawless power must be checked. The interests of men must be felt when their fortunes are committed to our care.

**II. Prostitutes were prohibited from their calling.** Males and females were devoted to the service of Ashtaroth, visited cities, wandered as mendicants in country villages and enticed the people to abominable crimes. 1. *Persons were forbidden to profess.* "There shall be no whore (sodomites) of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel," attachés to the worship of God and reproaches to the people of God. 2. *Their sinful gains were rejected at the altar.* The profits of prostitution must not be given into the treasury. They were scandalous hire, the price of a dog, an "abomination to the Lord," and must not be "brought into the house of the Lord." We cannot honour God with our substance unless secured by righteous means." God not only looks at what we give, but how we got it." "I hate robbery for burnt-offering."

"He will be found impartially severe,  
Too just to wink, or speak the guilty clear."

—Cowper.

#### CIVIL RIGHTS.—Verses 19–25.

Here is not only a plea for liberty and a check to lewdness, but a law of usury and of vows, and a right to appease hunger.

**I. A right to borrow without interest.** From a *stranger* interest might be allowed. Commerce must be carried on and capital invested. It is a legal act, and often a mutual benefit, to borrow and pay favour for the loan. But from an *Israelite* no interest must be taken. Kindly feeling must be cherished. "He is thy brother" (verse 20.) They might lend money, seed, or food among themselves; but covetousness be checked, separation from other nations must be preserved, and God must be acknowledged. "That the Lord thy God may bless thee."

**II. A right of discretion in making a vow.** None were compelled to vow. "If thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee." But having made a vow, it must be faithfully performed. "Thou shalt not slack to pay it." It is sacred in character, binding in force, and ought always to be made with timely caution (Num. xxx. 2). "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecc. v. 5).

**III. A right to refresh themselves in cornfields or vineyards.** Labourers in the vintage, or travellers in the cornfield, had an interest in the fruit of the land. 1. *Hunger might be appeased.* Provision was thus made for the poor. Nature's products are given to satisfy human wants. Jewish "poor laws" permitted neighbours to pluck the fruit of the proprietor's fields. "Thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand" (ver. 25). 2. *Dishonesty must not be practised.* The sickle must not be put into the standing corn, nor a grape carried away in a vessel. "Thou mayest take for necessity, not for superfluity," says Trapp. Kindness must not be abused. We must not censure men, nor insist upon compensation for trifles. Be generous. Remember "the kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour towards man" (Tit. iii. 4).

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 17, 18. *Dedication of unholy gains.* Many public prostitutes dedicated to their gods a part of their impure earnings, or were kept in the temple to support abominable worship. Such offerings—1. *A reproach to their dignity.* They were Israelites, the people of God. "No such thing ought to be done in Israel." 2. *An offence to their God.* Holiness becomes the house of worship of God. The wages of licentiousness pollute the altar. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 8, 21, 27).

Vers. 19, 20. *Usury.* 1. Lend cheerfully, without extortion or oppression. 2. Lend with a view to please God, whose favour will rest upon them in domestic, social and national life. "That the Lord thy God may bless

thee in all thou settest thine hand to in the land" (ver. 20).

Vers. 21-23. *Vows.* 1. Rule in making them. *a.* Voluntary. A self imposed obligation. *b.* Cautiously. "Be not rash with thy mouth, to cause thy flesh to sin" (Ecc. v. 6). 2. Rule in paying them. *a.* Instantly. As the best proof of sincerity. "Defer not to pay it." *b.* Cheerfully. "God loveth a cheerful giver." That which is gone out of the lips cannot be recalled, but performed solemnly, punctually, and fully.

Vers. 24, 25. *Varied Rights.* 1. The rights of travellers to eat. 2. The rights of property which must not be infringed. 3. The rights of God to claim possessions and legislate for their use. "The world is mine and the fulness thereof."

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXIII.

Vers. 1-6. *Defects.* Deplorable is the degradation of our nature.—*South.*

"Trust not yourself; but, your defects to know,  
Make use of every friend and every foe."—*Pope.*

Ver. 5. *Curse.* Human curses are oftentimes more an honour than a disgrace.—*Dr. Thomas.*

Vers. 7, 8. *Not abhor.* Let former kindnesses be remembered, and past injuries be forgotten.—*Wordsworth.*

"Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?  
Draw near them then in being merciful:  
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge."—*Shakspeare.*

Vers. 10-14. *Clean.* I have more than once expressed my conviction—that the humanizing influence of habits of cleanliness has never been sufficiently acted on. A clean, fresh, and well-ordered house exercises a moral, no less than a physical influence. Nor is it difficult to trace a connection

between cleanliness and the formation of habits of respect for property, for the laws in general, and even for those higher duties and obligations the observance of which no laws can enforce.—*Dr. S. Smith.*

Vers. 15, 16. *Servant.* St. Baron, before his conversion to Christianity, caused one of his slaves to be severely beaten and then sold. After his conversion, he could not rest till he had induced this slave to cause his imprisonment, where he deplored constantly his crime against his human and Christian brother.—*Ill. Paul and Onesimus.*

Vers. 17, 18. *Price.* Religious profession was, at first, a conflict—a sacrifice: now it is become a trade.—*R. Cecil.*

"Look to thy actions well:  
For churches either are our heaven or hell."—*G. Herbert.*

Vers. 19, 20. *Usury.* Commerce



flourishes by circumstances, precarious, contingent, transitory, almost as liable to change as the winds and waves that waft it to our shores.—*Cotton.*

Vers. 21-23. *Vows.* When you have promised to do any good office, the right of the thing promised hath, before the God of Truth, passed over from you to another; consequently, you will esteem yourself obliged to stand to the performance of your word, though it may be to your own prejudice.—*Venn.*

Vers. 24, 25.—A lady on her journey in India rested on her palanquin beneath the shade of some banyan trees, while her bearers kindled a fire, and her servant began his cooking preparations. Close by was a garden of gourds and other Indian vegetables, and the lady was surprised to see her servant coolly walk into this garden, gather first one kind of vegetable after another, till his

hands were full, when he went to the fire and began cutting them up. His mistress called him, told him not to forget to pay for all he had taken, for the owners would come and water the plants. The man smiled and said they would not require payment. The lady tried to explain that it was stealing to take away the property of another without paying for it. He smiled again and with truthful expression replied in broken English, "That no stealing, ma'am; that one custom in my country. Travelling this way take what we want, but no carry away." The owners of the garden soon afterwards appeared, the servant told them in his native tongue, how his mistress accused him of stealing, on which they were all amused. This had evidently been the habit of their country from time immemorial, and they had no desire to change, but were contented to do as their fathers had done before them.—*Biblical Treasury.*

## CHAPTER XXIV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—In this chapter certain duties social and domestic are chosen to illustrate the general application of the law.

1-5. Relation of man and wife. **Divorce.** The verses are hypothetical and should form one sentence, the first three being protasis and ver. 4 the apodosis. Moses neither institutes nor commands divorce, but permits, puts under careful regulations which was too prevalent, too deeply rooted to abolish. The passage harmonises with Mat. v. 31, 32; xix. 3-9. **Favour.** Does not please him. **Unclean.** Nakedness, disgrace or shame (1 Sam. xx. 30; Is. xx. 4). **Bill, i.e.,** writing of cuttings, a certificate of separation, from the man with whom the wife was one flesh (Gen. ii. 24). The first husband could not take his divorced wife back again; she was *defiled* (ver. 4) by marriage with a second husband. This moral defilement not removed by divorce from the second husband even after his death; but *abomination* a stain upon the land, as much as incest and licentiousness (Lev. xviii. 25).

5. A precept, similar to that in Ex. xxii. 25, 26.

6-9. Various prohibitions. *Upper* stone is concave and covers the *nether* like a lid-law, prohibited either from being taken; for then the hand-mill would be injured and life endangered.

7. Repetition of law against man-stealing (Ex. xxi. 16).

8, 9. Plague (Lev. 13, 14). Leprosy was the symbol of sin, most often the theocratic punishment, the penalty for sins committed against the theocracy, as in the cases of Miriam, Gehazi and Uzziah.—(*Abp. Trench.*)

10-13. Warnings against oppression. In loans they must not compel the borrower to give a pledge that was really necessary for him. If a poor man pledged his cloak it was restored before night. In East, poor generally have only their daily garments to cover them at night, (*cf.* Ex. xxii. 25, 26).

**16-18. Warning against injustice.** Hired servants, paid at close of day ; to withhold wages for a night would entail suffering and be *sin*, injustice.

**15.** Cf. Lev. xiv. 13, and Jas. v. 4.

**16.** Caution addressed to earthly judges. God, as Sovereign Judge of all nations might visit the sins of parents upon children (Ex. xx. 5). In heathen nations whole families were involved in the penalty of the parent and were put to death together ; in Israel it must not be thus (cf. 2 Kings xiv. 6 ; Jer. xxxi. 29, 30).

**17. Pervert.** Law against perverting right of strangers, widows and orphans repeated from (Ex. xxii. 20, 21 ; xxiii. 9) ; with addition not to take a widow's pledge, for they were once strangers and bondmen in Egypt (Lev. xix. 33).

**19-22. Portion of the friendless.** No injustice done to the poor, but they must be helped out of abundance ; by a forgotten sheaf in the harvest field (ver. 19) ; by the fruit of the olive tree (ver. 20) ; and by gleanings from the vintage (ver. 21). In ver. 22 the reason is given, as in ver. 18 and chap. xv. 15.

### THE SANCTITY OF THE MARRIAGE BOND.—*Verses 1-5.*

The relation between man and wife here set forth is one that is sacred and binding.

**I. One which must not be broken by frivolous pretexts.** The original institution sets forth the perpetuity of the bond (Gen. ii. 24). Divorce for a time may be tolerated, but it contravenes the order of nature and of God. No whims, no words, no slander (Ep. xxii. 13-19), no seduction before marriage (xxii. 28-29), must lead to separation. "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

**II. One which must be strengthened by every possible method.** Instead of frivolous rupture there should be constant endearment. The claims of married life rise above the exigencies of military service, and can only be severed by death. "He shall not go out to war" (ver. 5). Domestic duties must not be sacrificed to public engagements. "Neither shall he be charged with any business." Home must be guarded and the wife loved. "Be free at home and cheer up his wife."

### THE LAW OF DIVORCE.—*Verses 1-4.*

This permissive law of divorce was one of those "statutes" given to the Israelites that were not good (Ezek. xx. 25)—*i.e.*, not *absolutely*, but only *relatively* good ; not the universal and perpetual law, but a provisional enactment suited to the demoralized state and peculiar circumstances of the Hebrew people (Rom. v. 20 ; Gal. iii. 19). They were allowed to divorce their wives without the assignation of any cause ; but it was accompanied under the law with three conditions which were calculated greatly to prevent the evils incident to the permitted system, viz.—1st. That the act of divorcement was to be certified on a written document, the preparation of which with legal formality, probably by a Levite, who might admonish and counsel the parties, would afford time for reflection and repentance, as well as impart a solemn and deliberate character to the transaction. 2nd. That it was "given in (into) her hand," either privately or publicly. When delivered privately, it was stamped with the husband's seal, and handed to the repudiated wife in presence of her witnesses ; but when done publicly it was accompanied with increased formalities, and frequently taken to the Sanhedrim, to be there deposited in their archives for preservation. 3rd. That in the event of the divorced wife being married to

another husband, she could not on the termination of the second marriage be restored to her first husband, however desirous he might be to receive her. In the circumstances of the Israelitish people this law of divorce was of great use in preserving public morals, and promoting the comfort and permanence of married life.—*Jamieson's Com.*

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1-4. *Christ's toleration of divorce.* Viewing these words in relation to Matt. xix. 1-12, we learn—1. *That this was concessive legislation*; a deviation from the eternal standard of right, not a change of law—moral, like natural law, is unchangeable. Moses suffered them, “but from the beginning it was not so.” 2. That it was conceded on *account of their “hardness of heart.”* They had fallen into that condition in which obedience to the higher law was impossible. The least of two evils was chosen. But for divorce the woman might have been the victim of tyranny, rigour and death. But while permitting divorce, Moses restricts it.

*Checks upon divorce.* He enacts (1) that divorce must not take place as hitherto at the arbitrary will and pleasure of the husband, and by mere word of mouth, but by reason given,

and by means of a written and formal document. This legal document would require time and the intervention of public authority to attest sufficiency and due execution. This delay would give opportunity for reconsideration, interposition of magistrates to admonish and prevent frivolous complaints. (2) That the divorced wife who had married a second time shall never return to her first husband. This would admonish the parties that divorce once consummated would be irreparable and ought not therefore to be brought about rashly and lightly.—(*Speak. Com.*)

Vers. 1-5. *The rights of woman.*

1. To legal divorce when justified.
2. To be treated with due respect at home. Other systems degrade, but this exalts woman.

### THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE.—Verses 6, 7, and 10-12.

In these prohibitions we see the sacredness of life in its various conditions and changes.

**I. The implements by which life is sustained must not be taken.** The millstone was the only means of grinding corn for daily sustenance. To take any part would hinder work, prevent the payment of debt, and injure “a man’s life.” Tools are needful to trade; beds, clothing, and cooking utensils to the comforts of life. We must work with our hands the thing that is good that we may “have to give to him that needeth” (Ep. iv. 28).

**II. The freedom by which life is enjoyed must be respected.** To steal or sell a man was a capital offence, “That thief shall die.” Kidnapping deprives of liberty that gives life its chief value. Many would prefer death to slavery. To be made a slave would be a calamity most terrible, and when this results from kidnapping it is the most crushing of all misfortunes. Joseph was sold. Egyptian and classic history, American slavery, and African serfdom tell of bloody scenes enacted for purposes of man stealing. The law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ were greatly needed to check the atrocious crime. “He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death” (Ex. xxi. 16).



**III. The House in which life is spent must not be invaded.** The pledge must not be fetched out of the house. The owner must bring it to the door. "An Englishman's house is his castle." The home of the poor must be as safe as the mansion of the rich ; the hut of the serf as sacred as the palace of the prince. Thank God for the security and sanctity of home !

What can be sweeter than our native home !  
Thither for ease and soft repose He come ;  
Home is the sacred refuge of our life.—*Dryden*.

#### REMEMBRANCE OF THE PAST.—*Verses 8, 9.*

No house was to be visited by a lender, but in case of leprosy the priest might enter and examine it. Home was to be inviolable except when public security demanded exposure. Hence special warning is given to avoid any sin which might bring the plague. Miriam's case is prominently set forth. Learn—

**I. The past history records interventions of God.** God is in our own history—in the history of all nations, but especially in Jewish history. Under the Theocracy are remarkable instances of sins and punishments.

**II. These interventions of God should be remembered by us.** Israel were to remember "what the Lord God did" in Egypt and "by the way" to Canaan. "Memory is the conservative faculty," says Sir W. Hamilton. It preserves from oblivion events of importance, and puts them again before our eyes. "Remember Lot's wife." "Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Miriam."

**III. Obedience to this rule will convert past history into help for the future.** The future lies before us ; the past is the period of facts, pleasing or painful. It is the storehouse of instruction and encouragement. Things which are written in Scripture and in history are written "for our learning." Sin brings punishment, and obedience God's favour. Let us avoid the one and secure the other. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples (types, figures), and they are written for our admonition (warning)" (1 Cor. x. 11).

#### PROTECTION FOR THE UNFORTUNATE.—*Verses 10-17.*

In these words we have warnings against injustice and oppression of the poor—

**I. The poor must not be compelled to lend unlawful pledges.** "The borrower is servant to the lender," and may be forced to servile bondage. Man thus becomes an alien to his brother, and often the victim of gratification—not the object of sympathy. The widow's raiment was not to be taken (verse 17). The borrower was not to be compelled to give up any pledge needful for life and comfort. This would check strife, save from mendicancy, and urge generosity.

**II. The condition of the poor must not be needlessly exposed.** The lender was not to go into the house of the borrower (verse 10). He must spare his neighbour's feelings, and not require exposure of his home or declaration of insolvency. The creditor must not be insolent, but mitigate severity and preserve good feeling. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

**III. The wages of the poor must not be withheld.** "Thou shalt give him his hire" (verse 16). He sets his heart, has special desire for it, and his distress should urge its due payment. To withhold it for a night would be injustice,

and inflict great suffering. This humane law was highly esteemed in after times. "He who treats a hireling with harshness sins as grievously as if he had taken away life, and transgresses five precepts." It is robbery and a special sin against God. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning (Lev. xix. 13).

**IV. The poor must not be deprived of justice (ver. 17).** The repetition of this law indicates the strong tendency of the Jewish people to oppress and illuse strangers and the desire of the Moses to check it. They must not upbraid the stranger for his nationality nor remind him of his former idolatry. Their own bitter experience should remind them of this inhumanity. "Thou wast a bond-man in Egypt." Our own humiliation should soften our hearts towards others and teach us that the security of society depends upon the equal rights of all its ranks.

#### IMPORTANT RECOLLECTION.—*Verse 18.*

The admonition may seem needless, but we are prone to forget God's works and wonders. We have need to be stirred up to remembrance for four purposes. *First, for the purpose of humility.* We think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. With the lowly is wisdom. If wise, we were once foolish; if justified, we were once condemned; if sons of God, we were once servants of sin. Look to the rock from whence hewn. *Second, for the purpose of gratitude.* If affected by kindness from our fellow creatures, should we overlook our infinite Benefactor. We have no claims upon Him and should be thankful for all His benefits. But *herein* is love. Blessed be the God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people. *Thirdly, for the purpose of confidence.* David argued from the past to the future. Because thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. Here we have peculiar reason for encouragement. What were we when He first took knowledge of us? Was the want of worthiness a bar to His goodness then? Will it be so now? Is there variableness or shadow of turning with Him? Is there not the same power in His arm and the same love in His heart? Did He pardon me when a rebel, and will He cast me off now that He has made me a friend? "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all," etc. *Fourthly, for the purpose of pity and zeal.* How many round about you in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity ready to perish? You know the state they are in, and the blessedness of deliverance from it. You are witnesses what God is able and willing to do. Invite the prisoners of hope to turn to Him—you can speak from experience.—*Jay.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 8, 9. *The Plague of Leprosy.*  
1. Miriam's sin. 2. Miriam's punishment. 3. Miriam a warning to others.  
"Take heed."

3. Laws of labour. Hiring—prompt and frequent payment of labourer's wage.

Vers. 10–15. *Social Laws.* Law is the bond of social morality. 1. Laws of lending and borrowing. 2. Laws of social intercourse. Regard the circumstances and the homes of the poor.

Ver. 15. *Setteth his heart.* How exceedingly natural is this! The poor servant who seldom sees money, yet finds from his master's affluence that it procures all the conveniences and comforts of life, longs for the time

when he shall receive his wages. Should his pay be delayed after the time is expired, he may naturally be expected to cry unto God against him who withholds it.—*A. Clarke.*

“*Lest he cry.*” A crying sin (cf. Jas. v. 3), condemned by the very light of nature. Plato would have him double paid that is not paid in due time.—*Trapp.*

Vers. 17, 18. Three classes mentioned as liable to oppression. 1. *The stranger*; seldom protected by any legislation, unless they had become permanent residents. 2. *The fatherless*. 3. *The widow*. The right of widows and orphans were protected generally by civilised communities. But protection is often insufficient, therefore the command of God and the legal penalty certain to fall on those

who offend. “Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor,” etc. (Zech. 7, 9).

Ver. 18. *Remember*. Most people who have affluence, rose from comparative penury; for those who are born to estates frequently squander them away; such therefore should remember what *their* feelings, their fears, and anxieties were when they were poor and abject. A want of attention to this most wholesome precept, is the reason why pride and arrogance are the general characteristics of those who have risen in the world from poverty to affluence, and it is the conduct of those men which gave rise to the rugged proverb, “Set a beggar on horseback, and he’ll ride to the devil.”—*A. Clarke.*

#### HARVEST LAWS.—Verses 19–21.

In these words we have the earliest poor law that we read of in the code of any people, uniting the obligation of public duty with private benevolence.

**I. God has special regard for the poor.** The stranger, the fatherless, and the widow were defended by special providence. “The Lord’s poor are the Lord’s care.” The Mosaic law is full of tender provisions for them. To neglect, despise or reproach them is to mock God himself. “Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker” (Prov. xvii. 5).

**II. God demands that our charity should be constantly exercised towards the poor.** “The poor ye have always with you” to remind us of dependence upon God; to beget kindly feeling and cultivate constant charity. 1. *He gives substance for charity.* The harvest, the olive tree, and the vine, the fruits of the farm, and the results of labour and skill are His gifts. “What comes from God’s bounty should be laid out to God’s glory.” “Honour the Lord with thy substance,” etc. (Prov. iii. 9). 2. *He gives seasons for charity*—seed time and autumn—seasons of trial and want. Our bounties are never amiss—never out of season. “To everything there is a season and a time” (Ecc. iii. 1).

**III. The motive which should prompt this charity is God’s goodness to us.** “Remember thou wast a bondman in Egypt.” How often does God appeal to us on this ground? Facts in our experience and history enjoin warmest and purest benevolence to the wretched and defenceless—facts which many would turn to the cherishing of rancour, malevolence, and misanthropic feeling. God regardeth not persons; He knoweth no ritualistic and national differences. “He it is that executeth the judgment of the fatherless and the widow, and Who loveth the stranger to give unto Him food and raiment. Wherefore thou also must love the stranger, for ye yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt.”



GLEANING A DIVINE ORDINANCE.

I. The privilege of gleaning as accorded to the Jews: "freely they have received" of God, and "freely they were to give."

II. The far higher grounds of this privilege as existing among us. Let it be recollected from what misery we have been redeemed, and can we find a stronger argument than this for liberality to the poor. Learn—1. As gleaners, avail yourselves of your privilege. 2. As proprietors, perform the duties that are here enjoined you.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXIV.

Vers. 1-4. *Divorcement.* An idea may be formed of the social state of Palestine at the beginning of the Christian era from the existing condition of the Jews in that country. "Wherever the teaching of the oral law prevails unchecked, as in the holy cities of the East, the concocting of divorces forms a chief branch of the business of a Rabbi—he is occupied incessantly in putting asunder what God hath joined—and as a consequence those cities are full of poor, unhappy divorced women and girls, with all the intrigues inseparable from a state of things which saps the very foundations of society."—*Jewish Intelligence, September, 1863.*

Ver. 5. *Taken a wife.* After the battle of Granicus, previously to going into winter quarters, Alexander the Great proclaimed to all of his soldiers who had married that year, that liberty was granted them to return home to Macedonia and pass the winter in the society of their wives; appointing the officers to conduct this howeward-bound party and to bring them back to the army when their furlough was expired.—*cf. Jam. Com.*

Ver. 8. *Leprosy.* By others' faults wise men correct their own. "Therefore," says Bp. Hall, "God strikes some that he may warn all."

Vers. 10-15. *Poor.* It was the advice of a bishop to a candidate for ordination, "Take care of the poor, and the Lord will take care of you." The history of that clergyman (who is still living) has most remarkably justified the wisdom of the counsel and verified the truth of the prediction.—*G. S. Bowes.*

Vers. 19-21. *Harvest field.*

"Ye who have sown,  
And reap so plenteously, and find the grange  
Too narrow to contain the harvest given,  
Be not severe, nor grudge the needy poor  
So small a portion. For He who gave  
Will bounteously reward the purposed wrong  
Done to yourselves; nay, more, will twice  
repay  
The generous neglect."

—*Hurdis.*

Ver. 22. *Stranger.*

Love's special care  
Are strangers poor and friendless.

—*Odyss.*

CHAPTER XXV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—*Corporal punishment.* *Contror.*, dispute arising from inflicted injury. *Justify* pronounce just, Ex. xxiii. 7; Prov. xvii. 15.

2. *Lie down.* "Precisely the same as the Egyptian bastinado, which was applied to the bared back of the culprit, who was stretched flat on the ground, his hands and feet being held by

attendants" (*Jam*). The law of Moses introduced two restrictions, the infliction of punishment in presence of the judge and the limit to 40 stripes. If a criminal deserved severer punishment he was executed.

5. **Ox.** In other kinds of labour oxen were muzzled. The spiritual sense is applied, 1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18; Hos. x. 11.

5-10. **Law of Levirate Marriages.** This usage existed before the law of Moses (Gen. xxxviii. 8-11) and seems to have originated in patriarchal times, for preserving the name and honour of the eldest son—the chieftain of the family. The Mosaic law rendered the custom obligatory (Mat. xxii. 25) on younger brothers, or the nearest kinsman, to marry the widow (Ruth iv. 4); by associating the natural desire of perpetuating of a brother's name with the preservation of property in the Hebrew families and tribes (Num. xxxiii. 54; xxxvi. 9). If a younger brother declined to comply with law, the widow brought her claim before the authorities in public assembly (the gate of the city); she was ordered to loose the thong of his shoe (ver. 9) a sign of degradation—following up that act by spitting, not in his face, but in *his presence before him* on the ground (*Jam*.)

11, 12. Severe penalty imposed upon a shameless woman, who wilfully should endanger or take away the power of off-spring from a man, Ex. xxi. 22.

13-16. **Weights and measures.** *Divers, lit.*, "a stone and a stone"—one just and one false, or a light and heavy one. Weights consisted of stones; facility in procuring them tempted to fraud. *Measures, lit.*, "an ephah and an ephah," the common or standard measure in Israel. *Lengthened, cf.* iv. 26; v. 16. *Unrighteously.* Moses sums up all the breaches of the law. (*Keil*.)

17-19. **Doom of Amalek.** *Did, met, thee; i.e.*, stealthily and in hostile encounter; not found in Ex. xvii. 14. The Jews had not only to manifest love and kindness, but often to inflict punishment upon God's enemies. They were executors of Divine judgment upon Amalek and others; *cf.* 1 Sam. xv. 3, 32, 33.

### PUNISHMENT OF THE GUILTY.—*Verses 1-3.*

God took special care for the administration of justice. The guilty must be punished, and the innocent defended. It is the duty of earthly tribunals to govern in equity.

**I. Punishment incurred.** There must not be mere report or accusation. The accused and accuser must be brought face to face, the dispute decided before the authorities, and the criminal be found "worthy to be beaten." The wicked cannot sin with impunity. Punishment was demanded under the theocracy. Conscience predicts retribution and human magistrates are appointed to administer it. In doing so they are types of the eternal judge.

**II. Punishment inflicted.** We have special directors given to make the penal system just and effective. 1. *By the authority of the judge.* Not by some private heartless official wishing for revenge. Magistrates bear the sword, (Rom. xiv. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 14, 21). 2. *In publicity.* "Before his face." This would be itself a part of punishment and a check to cruelty and excesses. 3. *According to desert.* "According to his fault." There must be discrimination and rectitude. To justify the wicked and condemn the just would reverse the order of justice, and become "an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvii. 15). 4. *In measured degree.* "Forty stripes he may give and not exceed," v. 3. Stripes, few or many, according to guilt, but never to exceed forty. Punishment should ever be measured according to strictest justice. Our penal code has been disgraced by cruel administration, and punishment has often been excessive, outrageous, and beyond moral desert. "They shall judge it according to my judgments." 5. *With scrupulous fear.* Lest "thy brother should seem vile unto thee." Excessive punishment degrades humanity, dishonours law, and hardens the criminal. He must be corrected, reformed, and treated with humanity. "Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

THE RIGHTS OF LABOUR.—*Verse 4.*

The command not to put a muzzle upon the ox, is no doubt proverbial in its nature, and even in the context before us is not intended to apply merely literally to an ox employed in threshing, but to be understood, in the general sense in which the Apostle Paul uses it in (1 Cor. ix. 9, and 1 Tim. v. 18), viz. : that a labourer was not to be deprived of his wages. *Keil.*

**I. Rights enforced by common usage.** The use of oxen in treading out corn unmuzzled still prevails among Arabs and eastern nations. If God takes "care for oxen," we must treat them kindly. The ox is not a mere animal, but a labourer, contributing to the sustenance and help of man.

**II. Rights enforced by special enactment.** This was a wonderful provision in the law of Moses. Nothing was too trivial connected with men or brutes. God defends the rights of every creature, and teaches us to recognise the nobility of labour in the smallest law.

**III. Rights enforced by Divine Law.** This is a general principle, extending to the plougher and the sower. Toilers of hand and brain are not mere drones, but essential to the well-being of society. In all departments "the labourer is worthy of his hire." The highest authority applies the law to ministerial support (Luke x. 1). "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Tim. v. 18).

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 3. *Exceed.* Abuse of power in excessive punishment. Power given for *edification* not *destruction* (2 Cor. xiii. 10). "There is an honour due to all men (1 Pet. ii. 17), and though we must hate the sin, yet not the sinner," *Trapp.* The reason assigned by the legislator in this statute for restricting the number of stripes is very remarkable. It is not simply a motive of compassion for a sufferer—it is a respect for human nature, the rights of which are preserved even in a criminal. To inflict upon a man an excessive and degrading punishment is to outrage the feelings of those who witness it, and to pour contempt upon humanity itself. This humane character of the Mosaic legislation is deserving of special notice. How rigorous soever it may be in some respects, it upholds the dignity of man's nature, and does not permit even a guilty offender to "seem vile unto others."—*Jamieson.*

Ver. 4. *Not muzzle the ox.* Though enacted in a particular case, it teaches the humane lesson that animals, while engaged in the service of man, are entitled to his indulgence and kindness. Paul quotes this law (1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18), and shows that God did not appoint it for the sake of oxen alone, but that every labourer is worthy of his hire, and hence declares the obligation of men to exercise justice in properly rewarding those who labour for their advantage, especially those who labour for the good of their souls. The application, so far from weakening, seems to confirm its obligation and reference to that point, inasmuch as it displays to us that, in the eye of God, the same principles of equity are expected to prevail amongst all His creatures, and that they are not to be confined to our dealings with men.—*Jamieson.*

THE LAW OF LEVIRATE MARRIAGE.—*Verses 5-10.*

This law is not peculiar to the Jews, but is found in all essential respects the same among various Oriental nations, ancient and modern, and exists at present



among the South African tribes, the Arabians, the Druses, and the tribes of the Caucasus (*Speak. Com.*)

**I. The duty imposed.** The obligation was onerous and recognised as one of affection for the memory of the deceased. It devolved upon the neighbouring kinsman—"brethren that dwell together," not "a stranger." Affection is needful in married life. This cannot be forced. *Love* leads to duty and self-sacrifice.

**II. The design of the obligation.** (*a*) To prevent alienation of property; (*b*) To raise up seed. To be without issue was considered a great calamity (Gen. xvi. 4); a successor and heir a great blessing; (*c*) To perpetuate a name, "that his name be not put out of Israel." Parents are anxious to maintain the honour and preserve the name of the family. Loss of inheritance, alienation of the rights of the firstborn, are a disgrace. God's favour is better than fame which "is the shade of immortality, and in itself a shadow."

Unblemished let me live, or die unknown,

Oh! grant me honest fame, or grant me none.—*Pope.*

**III. The reproach of neglecting the obligation.** It was not so binding as to permit no escape. If the brother preferred to submit to reproach. "If the man like not," he might refuse (ver. 7). Then the thong of his shoe was loosed, he was stripped of power and degraded as a slave. Spitting in the face or in his presence, was the strongest expression of insult and contempt. The man was not worthy to take his brother's place, was scornfully rejected by the woman herself, and his name became a bye-word in Israel. "The house of him that hath his shoe loosed."

#### TRADE MORALITY.—Verses 13-16.

The language of Scripture on this point demands the serious attention of all engaged in trade. Principles of life are given in minute detail and enforced by special sanctions.

**I. God requires honesty in trade.** Not only in courts of law, but in commercial life, in the market place, and in the shop, justice must be done. There must be no different weights and measures; one for buying and another for selling; one light and another heavy. This was the iniquitous system of Jews. Accurate inspection may restrain gross deceit with us. But trickery and close dealing, evasion of legal rights, and deviation from honest trading are too prevalent. Advantage is taken of ignorance. Impositions, double-dealings and hard bargains are struck with cleverness and self-satisfaction (Prov. xx. 14). Christian professors and Christian churches have need of warning and care. "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter" (1 Thess. iv. 6).

**II. Honesty in trade is enforced by special sanctions.** That which is the standard of measure, the rule of justice must of itself be just. If not there will be fraud and deceit. 1. *Justice will gain temporal advantage.* "That thy days may be lengthened in the land" (ver. 15). Right prolonged life and made it happy. As a matter of self-interest, "Honesty is the best policy." It will enrich spiritual experience, promote social morality and preserve national life. 2. *Justice will secure God's approval.* We must act as under his eye and seek "a conscience void of offence towards God and man." Equity and not "customs of the trade" must be our law. "A false balance is abomination to the Lord; but a just weight (a perfect stone) is *his delight*" (Prov. xi. 1). 3. *Injustice will expose to God's curse.* "All that do unrighteously are

abomination unto the Lord." Man may excuse convenient lies, commend trickery for its wisdom (Luke xvi. 1-8) and cry "business is business," but such trading is hateful to God, will bring shame and curse upon those who practise it. "Divers weights (a stone and a stone) and divers measures (an ephah and ephah), both of them are alike abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xx. 10).

### THE CHRISTIAN IN COMMERCE.

The greatest difficulties in the way of a Christian commercial life, arise out of the practices which prevail. Enforce right conduct, you are met by an appeal to general sanction, and a reference to the consequences which would follow from its adoption, in ridicule and condemnation, in loss and suffering. Thus the Christian tradesman must shape his principles in the way of reform and opposition—

**I. Endeavour to point out what Christianity requires of a man in his dealings in business with his fellow-men.** 1. *Christianity requires the most rigid adherence to the principles of moral integrity in commerce.* Truth is one of these, which lies at the basis of all intercourse, and without which society would be impossible. All positive misrepresentations, all arts by which one thing is passed off for another, all false appearances given to things, and all deficient scales and measures, are condemned. *Honesty* is another Christian virtue in commerce. In giving everyone his due, in meeting all equitable claims. For a man to refuse to pay his debts is dishonest. "Owe no man anything." A debt is a debt until it be paid or forgiven. Bankruptcy is not payment. No earthly tribunal can exempt from the claims of eternal justice, and an honest debtor will deem nothing *his* while creditors are unsatisfied in fact or feeling. It is a grand saying of De Foe, "The obligations of an honest man can never die." 2. *Christianity requires the exercise of love and kindness in commerce.* A man may be just, and yet a monster of inhumanity. The Christian spirit of love should not be confined to some departments of human life and excluded from others. It is designed to create a higher morality than that of the world, it will dictate much which law cannot take cognizance of, and preserve for the wretched practice of exclusive dealing, of punishing a man for his politics or religion by withholding custom and thus making commerce the instrument of bigotry and exclusiveness. 3. *Christianity requires that a man should preserve his soul in peace and patience in commerce.* Commerce implies contact with others. It compels intercourse with men of powerful passions, different dispositions and opposite principles. Hence we are sorely tried, exposed to innumerable disappointments, vexations and annoyances. We may be deceived by those we trusted, and injured by those we benefited. All this must be endured in meekness, and the heart must be kept calm and unruffled, seek no revenge, but cherish the spirit of love. 4. *Christianity requires that commerce should be consecrated and elevated by the spirit of holiness.* There is a hardening and corrupting tendency in commercial pursuits. Constant calculation of profit and loss, incessant contemplation of pecuniary interests are apt to contract and debase the soul. The man who gives himself wholly to gain becomes earthly, sensual and devilish. All spiritual generous sensibilities and aspirations are destroyed. He becomes less malleable than the coin with which he deals. But Christianity teaches that commerce is a means, not an end; "that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesses;" that we may be poor, yet having all things, and rich, yet having nothing. Commerce will be really noble and raised from the dust, when the higher faculties are cultivated

with secular pursuits ; wealth possessed and used in the spirit of stewardship, and a vigorous habit of Christian liberality finds a constant vent for the acquisitions of Christian industry.

**II.** Having described what a Christian should be in commerce briefly show why he should be it. All considerations by which religion and morality are commended and enforced are applicable here. The course pointed out is right in itself, what we owe to God and connected with eternal destiny. It is necessary to inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is presented to us in the example of Christ, whom all disciples should imitate. In one word, Christianity requires it ; all its precepts, principles, blessings, and prospects require it. But adduce some particular considerations. 1. *Commerce is a most important part of life.* It enters largely into our engagements. It is in some form or other the greatest part of the life of multitudes. Could a man be a Christian and yet not be a Christian in his dealings with his fellow-men ? Is it possible to retain the spirit of the gospel and yet not bring it into business ? The power of religion must be best displayed here. The truest test of a man's spirituality is in his secular life. It is often said, "A man is really what he is relatively." I would add a man is spiritually what he is secularly. 2. *Commerce is a most influential part of our life.* It is part of life with which men have most to do and of which they can best judge. It is the world-side of our religion. Ungodly men cannot see us believe and always hear us pray, but they behold our behaviour towards others. Though ignorant of doctrinal theology, and strangers to true spirituality, they are no bad critics of moral conduct. What then is our influence, if we be not holy in business ? What use saying, "I know the truth," if it can be replied, "You do a lie ?" What an agency in the conversion of the world would be a blameless secular life throughout the Church ! It would be better than an army of ten thousand missionaries. 3. *Commercial holiness is imperatively required by the character and temper of the times.* It is a commercial country and age in which we live, and commercial sinfulness is a prevailing feature. It is the duty of the Christian to adapt his example and display the virtue most wanted. Never more necessary for saints to "condemn the world" by secular integrity, to give a noble example for it to follow, and to bring a spirit from above to bear on its pursuits. (A. J. Morris.)

#### THE DOOM OF AMALEK.—Verses 17-19.

"Whilst the Israelites were to make love the guiding principle of their conduct in their dealings with a neighbour, and even with strangers and foes, this love was not to degenerate into weakness or indifference towards open ungodliness. To impress this truth upon the people, Moses concludes the discourse on the law by reminding them of the crafty enmity manifested toward them by Amalek upon their march out of Egypt, and with the command to root out the Amalekites" (cf. Ex. xvii. 9-16).—*Keil*.

**I. Amalek's sin against Israel.** "How he met thee by the way," stealthily and fierce encounter, in a most difficult and risky place, "in Rephidim" (cf. Ex. xvii. 8). 1. This attack was *unprovoked*. No occasion was furnished for it. Israel had not the remotest intention to injure the persons or seize the territory of Amalek. But they were jealous at the prosperity of Israel, as descendants of Esau entertained a grudge against them, and longed to injure them. 2. This attack was *cowardly*. It was a mean, dastardly, insidious surprise, not in front, but in the rear, on "the hindmost"—not on the strong and vigorous, but on "the feeble," "the faint and weary." We have a kind of reverence for the



brave, but cowards are objects of scorn and contempt. 3. This attack *was cruel*. Upon stragglers, upon a host tired in the march, almost unarmed and unable to resist. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." 4. This attack *was presumptuous*. "He feared not God." A defiance against God of whom they had heard, and whose mighty acts in Egypt and the Red Sea had defended his people. It was an insult, "a lifting up of the hand upon the throne of God" (*Marg. Ex. xvii. 16*). "The fear of God" alone can restrain from evil. When this is cast off, there will be no "regard for men."

**II. Amalek's sin remembered by God.** "Remember what Amalek did." A record was kept "in the book" (*Ex. xvii. 14*), and this conduct was never forgotten. 1. *Sin is never overlooked*. Silence may be kept at the time of commission. God may appear to connive, to *wink* at times of ignorance and sin (*Acts xvii. 30*), but they are not overlooked. If no direct interposition, men must not excuse, take courage, and cry God hath forgotten. God's patience is no proof that He thinks lightly of sin. *Sentence* is gone forth; Edom's doom was predicted, but warning is given, time for repentance afforded before execution. 2. *Sin is kept in remembrance*. A book of record is found somewhere. An impress is left upon nature, upon the human mind, and upon moral conduct. Wickedness is read in the pangs of conscience, the power of evil habits, and the moral forces of the universe. God prepares ministers of vengeance, and in due time the judgment will come.

**III. Amalek's sin punished by God.** Injustice and cruelty towards God's people will not pass unavenged. Joshua had punished them, but a more terrible doom awaited them. 1. *Punishment long delayed*. For some wise reason the honour of Jehovah was not vindicated at the time. The base attack was repelled, but the territory was not invaded—the final judgment was delayed. This was inflicted partly by Saul and David (*1 Sam. xiv. 48*; *xxvii. 8*; *xxx. 17*; *2 Sam. viii. 12*), finally and completely under Hezekiah (*1 Chron. iv. 43*). Judgment may linger, but it is "laid up in store." 2. *Punishment by those who have suffered*. God's people themselves, when fixed in privileges and possession, must inflict it. Power and position are not given for selfish enjoyment. We must be ready for warfare as well as for service. No pity, no pride must prevent us from executing God's will upon our enemies. "Remember," "thou shalt not forget it." 3. *Punishment most severe*. "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (*Ex. xvii. 14*). Fearful doom! But Scripture, Providence and human history confirm the law—"He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 11, 12. *Shameful insult*. No excuse in the plea to help her husband. "Modesty is the hedge of chastity, and therefore ought to be very carefully preserved and kept up by both sexes."

Vers. 13-16. "*Customs of trade*." Often—(1) sinful, (2) corrupting, and (3) dangerous. "Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?" (*Micah vi. 11*).

Vers. 17-19. *Amalek*. 1. Ungodly principles lead to wicked conduct. "Amalek feared not God." 2. Wicked conduct is not allowed to go unpunished in the providence of God. 3. This punishment when inflicted is full of suggestion—(a) *delayed* to prove the patience of God towards his enemies. (b) *severe*, to avenge His people, and teach the doctrine of retribution. "The portion of wicked men is to be 'forgotten in the city where they had so done'" (*Eccles. viii. 10*). Their memory

dies with them ; or if it be preserved, it stinks in keeping, and remains as a curse and perpetual disgrace" (*Trapp*). It is not always consistent with the purposes of the Divine economy to vindicate the honour of Jehovah by any general punishment at the time. But if no further notice had been taken, this contemptuous defiance of the power and majesty of God would have appeared to escape with impunity, a circumstance which might have degraded the Deity in the estimation of Israel, who judged of His power as

all other nations then judged of their guardian gods, by His rigour and promptitude in defending His people and punishing their enemies. He would not suffer Amalek to pass finally unpunished, but would authorise and employ them to inflict judgment, thus impressing His people themselves with the salutary conviction that where the majesty of Jehovah was insulted, *present delay of punishment affords no presumption of final impunity.*—(*Graves on Pent.*)

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXV.

Vers. 1-4. *Judgment.* No obligation to justice does force a man to be cruel, or to use the sharpest sentence. A just man does justice to every man and every thing ; and then, if he be also wise, he knows there is a debt of mercy and compassion due to the infirmities of man's nature ; and that is to be paid ; and he that is cruel and ungentle to a sinning person, and does the worst to him, lies in his debt and is unjust.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Vers. 13-16. *Trade.* What signifies a man's trade? A man of honest trade can make himself respectable if he will (*George III.*). To be honest as this

world goes is to be one picked out of ten thousand.—*Shakspeare.*

Vers. 17-19. *Not forget.* Most just it is that he who breweth mischief should have the first draught of it himself.—(*Jemmat*). For inquisition shall be made into the counsels of the ungodly, and the sound of his words shall come unto the Lord for the manifestation of his wicked deeds (*Wisdom i. 7-9*). Mercy to him that shows it is the rule by which heaven moves in pardoning guilty man ; and he that shows none, being ripe in years, and conscious of the outrage he commits, shall seek it and not find it in his turn.—*Cowper.*

### CHAPTER XXVI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—The rehearsal of rights and duties, public and private, terminates in this chapter with two liturgical enactments. These have a clear and close reference to the whole of the preceding legislation, and form a most appropriate and significant conclusion to it. (*Sp. Com.*)

1-11. *First fruits. Fruit.* Visible proof of possession ; distinguished from those offered in harvest (*cf. Ex. xxii. 29*), at feasts of Passover and Pentecost, and from offerings prescribed (*Num. viii. 8*). These are private and personal—not national.

3. *Priest.* Owned the first fruits as property. *Profess*, a confession of offerer, of indebtedness.

5. *Syrian.* (*Lit. aramœan*) from residence with Laban in Syria. *Perish*, by Laban's severity and many hardships in nomadic life. *Egypt* (*cf. Gen. 46*).

6. *Evil.* On multiplication and oppression in bondage, and guidance out (*cf. Ex. i. ii. iv. v. 11*). *Rejoice* either in the possession of blessings given, or in feasting with friends, Levites, and strangers.

**12-15. Tithin.** *Third year's tithe* employed at home in charity and hospitality.

**13. Hallowed.** Consecrated, things devoted to holy uses. *I have not.* Not a self-righteous boast, but solemn declaration that nothing which should be devoted to God had been secretly kept back.

**14. Mourning.** "When the Israelite would be unclean;" or like Egyptians made in harvest time, offered the first fruits of earth and kept feast of Isis in doleful lamentation. *Unclean,* unworthy of divine acceptance. *Dead* in funeral service as some; or to idols, deified heroes and lifeless images—all things were dedicated to glad and holy, not to unclean and idolatrous purposes.

**15. Look.** Form of thanksgiving (*cf.* Is. lxiii. 15).

**16-19. Faithful obedience.** "A brief and earnest exhortation by way of conclusion to the second and longest discourse of the book." *A vowed,* solemnly pledged themselves to obey; accepted Jehovah as their God, who had declared that if they kept the covenant they should be His special people.

**19. Above.** (*cf.* Ex. xix. 6). "The sanctification of Israel was the design and end of its divine election, and would be accomplished in the glory to which the people of God were to be exalted."—*Keil.*

### GAINING THE INHERITANCE.—*Verses 1-11.*

Reference had been made to the sanctuary as the place chosen by God and fit for religious worship (chap. 12). Two gifts specially connected with the social life of the people had to be presented—the first fruits and the second tithe. Moses now prescribes the form of the interesting ceremony, which reminded the nation of their indebtedness, and duty to God.

**I. An acknowledgment of God's help in getting the inheritance.** God was very prominent in Israel's history and position. Precept and command, rite and ceremony, reminded them of this. 1. *God promised the inheritance.* Good and great things are promised to us to wean affection from earth, excite hope, and stimulate effort. God presents worthy objects on which to centre hope, and gives grace by which it may be realised. 2. *God settled them in the inheritance.* Good may be withheld and fulfilment delayed through ingratitude, unbelief and rebellion. But if we are faithful and follow God, he will fulfil the promise and lead us "into the land." We shall possess without fear; dwell without disturbance, and no power on earth can uproot us. He can "establish (fix), strengthen (for defence), and settle" (1 Peter v. 10).

**II. A confession of unworthiness to receive the inheritance.** No merit is due to us. If inheritance is *given*, it is not created by human toil and skill. From beginning to end of life God must be honoured and man humbled. "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" 1. *Humble in origin* (ver. 5). The "nation great, mighty and populous" sprang from "a few," the many from one, "a Syrian ready to perish." God is wonderful in working, and brings great results from small beginnings. "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase" (Job viii. 7; xlii. 12). 2. *Helpless in history.* Few, hated, and oppressed, what could Israel do? "The mighty hand" and "the outstretched arm" alone could deliver, defend, and secure the inheritance. The might of Egypt, the perils of the desert, and the dangers of conquest were overcome by God's help. With omnipotence on our side we can do anything. "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm" (Ps. xliv. 3).

**III. The duty imposed by securing the inheritance.** Duty means debt. God's bounties always put us under obligation. The response should be hearty.



"What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us?" 1. *To consecrate the first fruits.* "Thou shalt take the first of all the fruit of the earth." Conscientious and careful dedication of first fruits is required. Everyone should bring his "basket" to God as an acknowledgment of mercy. This in token of the sanctification of the whole. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase." 2. *To worship God in public.* The offerer had "to go into the place" which God had chosen. The gift must be accompanied with public worship and confession; "worship before the Lord" (ver. 10). Remembrance of Divine goodness kindles adoration and praise. Fervent praise is acceptable to God, and leads to love and amity in His people. 3. *To cultivate social joy* (ver. 11). God has made us prosper, and we should make others glad. Gifts received in the right spirit and used in the right way enlarge our sympathies and help us to promote the enjoyment of our fellow men. The highest will remember the lowest in society. The most wealthy will seek out and relieve the outcast and most degraded. In the spirit of Christ we shall "sit down" with strangers and fatherless, "with publicans and sinners, and eat with them."

### DIVINE HELP IN HUMAN LIFE.

Israel had "come" to the land, but the way had not been discovered and cleared by their own guides. They had been "brought unto the place," almost carried like helpless children by Divine goodness. It was fit that they should know, confess this and learn lessons of wisdom. "The private life of man," says Napoleon I., "is a mirror in which we may see many useful lessons reflected."

**I. Divine help in timely circumstances.** Life is full of change, a journey "through many a scene of joy and woe." But God helps "in time of need." 1. *In periods of risk,* "A Syrian ready to perish" was Jacob. The cruelty of Laban, the wrath of Esau and the perilous journey to Egypt endangered life. "There is but a step between me and death," said David. 2. *In periods of adversity.* "Evil entreated, afflicted and under hard bondage" (ver. 6). This prepares us for advancement, as it did Joseph, David, and Israel. The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor can we be perfected without suffering. 3. *In periods of prosperity.* "The day of adversity" is not our *entire* lot. "The day of prosperity" is equally a divine appointment. "God also hath set (made) the one over against (like parallel with) the other" (Ecc. vii. 14.) We need divine instruction especially in prosperity, to humble and show us our unworthiness (Gen. xxxii. 10). To keep us dependant and grateful, and remind us of our origin and history. "Look unto the rock whence ye are known, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged."

**II. Divine help secured through prayer.** "We cried unto the Lord our God" (ver. 7). Prayer teaches dependence upon God. In trouble we have an incentive to pray. Men who have ridiculed have then been compelled to acknowledge God. In affliction and danger prayer is earnest and prolonged. "We cried unto the Lord." Confidence in God has given courage and gained success in battle. Moses and Elijah were the real defence of Israel; Hezekiah and Isaiah brought down blessings upon Jerusalem (2 Chron. xxxii. 20-23). "The good man's prayer moves Omnipotence in the administration of the universe." It is a mighty, moral force in the history of men; it has achieved what numbers and valour never could achieve. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses."

**III. Divine help acknowledged in grateful remembrance.** Several forms of memorial are given. Sensible signs are often needful to quicken memory and prompt gratitude in reviewing past life. 1. *In self consecration to God.* There can be no worship without this. Attendance and reverent attitude are outward acts. The heart must be touched and drawn out before we can offer spiritual service. Nothing can rise above its limits. A beast cannot act as a man, and a man perform the work of an angel. Neither can the impenitent, ungrateful sinner render true worship. Only when love fills the heart and mercy is duly appreciated do we present ourselves "as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God." 2. *In acts of practical piety.* The Israelite was not merely to "profess" (ver. 3), but perform, "take the first of all the fruit." Words are cheap but deeds are scarce. God requires sincerity as well as sacrifice. The first fruits of time and mental vigour. The produce of our land and the share of our gains belong to Him. The best of everything should be offered to God. "The first fruit of thy corn, of thy vine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give Him." 3. *In works of perpetual charity.* Love to God must show itself in benevolence to men—the divinity we preach be seen in the humanity we practise. Charity must never fail. Relief must not merely be given in "deserving cases," to persons "worthy of help," but to the undeserving. "The world is the hospital of christianity," and the duty of the Church is to seek out the destitute and aged, those in great suffering and unable to work. This is the mark of "pure religion" says James i. 27. This gained Job a character which his friends could not assail, and a reputation which they could not tarnish (xxxi. 16-22). "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that those bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Is. lviii. 6, 7; l. 17).

#### GOD'S GIFTS.—Verses 9-11.

The dedication of first fruits was an act of worship, an acknowledgment of God's bounty, and a confession of entire dependence upon Him for every mercy received.

**I. God's gifts bestowed in rich abundance.** Deliverance, security, health, and honour—the fruits of the earth and the profits of business. Everyone has personal experience to relate of thrilling interest;—escape from danger, incidents of travel, re-union of friends. What "signs and wonders" in our past and present life!

**II. God's gifts designed for human happiness.** "Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing"—in private comfort or in social festivity. We are objects of God's constant care and kindness, and others should be remembered and share with us. Our gifts are not for selfish indulgence. We must not be like the Caspian Sea which receives rain and rivers which flow into it, and which is said not to have an outlet—not a rill to run from its waters. "Eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared" (Neh. viii. 10).

**III. God's gifts dependent upon obedience for continuance.** What we have may be taken away if we do not improve it (Mark iv. 25). The diligent worker gathers to himself what is lost by the idle, and talents not used pass away from the possessor. "If we do not use, we lose."—*Matthew Henry.* Temporal mercies can never produce holy joy unless used for God. Withhold the first fruits and the whole may be withdrawn. Give and you shall possess "a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deut. xi. 27; xxx. 1, 15).

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 3-6. *Gratitude to God enforced.* We shall I. Point out our duty in reference to the mercies we have received. For this purpose we ought—1. To review them frequently; 2. To requite them gratefully. II. Recommend it to your attention. It is—1. A universal; 2. A reasonable; 3. A delightful duty.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

Ver. 5. *Great results from small beginnings.* 1. In the history of Israel. 2. In personal history. 3. In history of the Christian church. What hath God wrought! Admire the power of God; recognise the providence of God; acknowledge dependence upon God.

Ver. 11. "*Duty of delight.*" A duty specially appropriate to a Christian upon whom all gifts of grace and sweet influences are bestowed by a reconciled God. "Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. vi. 17). This was—1. An O. T. principle, "Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. viii. 10). 2. A N. T. command. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice" (1 Th. v. 16). "Finally, my

brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. iii. 1). 3. A duty sadly forgotten. "They dwell on the duty of self-denial, but they exhibit not the duty of delight," says Ruskin.

This verse exhibits—1. *The will of God.* Some say "they will suffer for it" if they are glad, as if God grudged happiness to His creatures and took hard compensation for their enjoyments. They forget that God's nature is a joyful nature—that the element in which He lives is a joyful one, and that when He communicates good and bestows a new nature they are parts of His joy. Showing forth praise is a work and a witness for God in a joyless world and a thankless race.

"A sunshine in a shady place."

2. *The nature of true religion.* See the exquisite sense that is in this wonderful book, the Bible. The one extreme is you must live an ascetic, denying yourself everything; the other extreme is, you must live like an epicurean, enjoying exclusively a monopoly of everything. The prescription of the Bible is, take the food that God sends you, thank Him for it, rejoice in it.

THE SACRED USE OF COMMON GIFTS.—*Verses 12-15.*

The second year's tithe, or vegetable tithe, instead of being taken to the sanctuary as in other years, was devoted to hospitality and charity at home (*cf.* xiv. 28.) At "the end of tithing," a solemn declaration was made before God that the law had been strictly fulfilled, and nothing reserved for personal use.

I. *Nothing had been misappropriated.* In many ways God's gifts are misapplied. 1. *In ways of uncleanness.* "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning," when the Israelite would be unclean (Lev. xxi. 1; Hos. ix. 4). Sorrow should not be associated with thanksgiving and joy in God. The blessings of life tend not to degrade, but to elevate and dignify. 2. *In alienation from sacred purposes.* "Neither have I taken away aught for any unclean use" (ver. 14). For any common use different from that appointed—gifts have a sacred as well as secular use. They are desecrated if spent upon ourselves or in sin. They are God's property and must not be used as we please. He has claims upon us. The Levite, the widow, and the fatherless, represent His claims. To neglect them is to disobey and insult Him. 3. *In consecration to unlawful practices.* "Nor given aught for the dead." In funeral expenses or feasts of



mourning which were often urgent and unforeseen. Houses of mourning or idolatrous customs, it would be unlawful to sanction. Our gifts are abused if diverted from hospitality and religion, if devoted entirely to worldly customs or forbidden uses.

**II. Everything had been duly performed.** Nothing had been withheld. "I have hearkened and done all thou hast commanded." If disobedient, this solemn confession was a lie—an act of hypocrisy! The danger of the Church to-day is not from outward assailants, but from unfaithfulness and inward corruption, from false vows of mere professors and partial consecration of real believers. The precepts of the Gospel and the spirit of the Master lay a tax upon the worldly goods and personal sympathies of the wealthy and gifted. If from selfish motives we keep back some and profess to have devoted all to God, we act the part of Ananias. Every one should declare the supreme worth and manifest the inward beauty of truthfulness. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight!"

**III. Everything was enjoyed by permitting others to share it.** "I have given them unto the Levite and unto the stranger," etc. (ver. 13). Dedicated things were devoted to glad and holy feasting. Do good to all men, for they are God's creatures. But the necessitous are the special objects of God's care, and should partake of our beneficence. "God hath left his poor saints to receive his rents" (*Gurnall*). Alms given to them are lent to God (Prov. xix. 17) and will be paid back with interest in their increase and enjoyment. We double our joys and increase our own store when others share them. "We should remember the poor" (Gal. ii. 10).

#### PRAYER AND CHARITY.—*Verses 13-15.*

The tithes were to be presented, a declaration made that they had not been withheld, and then an earnest prayer offered for the land and the people who dwelt in it (ver. 15).

**I. Prayer and charity united in Christian life.** We have the aspect man-wards and god-wards. Love as you are loved; forgive that you may be forgiven, bestow that you may receive again. Alms and prayers spring from one root and are bound together by one law. Cornelius "was a devout man, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts x. 3).

**II. Charity no ground for boasting in prayer.** We only do our duty that we are commanded to do, when we help the destitute. This affords no ground for pride and the spirit of the Pharisee—a self-complacent and self-vaunting spirit. Instead of numbering fasts, tithes and merits; we must forsake our sins, love God and our neighbour as ourselves (*cf.* Luk xviii. 11, 12). "These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone."

**III. Prayer that charity may be constantly practised.** We cannot give to others unless blessed ourselves. Constant prayer secures constant supply. "Ask and ye shall receive." Prayer begets dependence, fitness to receive, and readiness in bestowing our blessings. Our liberality should ever be the outcome of our gratitude to God. "Freely ye have received, freely give."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 13-15. *Devotion and daily life.* Integrity in daily life the condition of acceptable prayer. Prayer reminds of shortcomings in daily life

—should prompt to self examination and obedience.

Ver. 15. *Prayer and patriotism.* The prosperity of the nation (*land*)

intimately connected with the moral condition of the people. A blessed people, a blessed land. "We must learn hence to be public-spirited in prayer, and to wrestle with God for blessings for the land and nation, our English Israel, and for the universal Church, which we are directed to remember in our prayers, as the Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16).

*Reverence in prayer.* 1. For God is Holy. Holiness becomes His house. 2. For without His cognizance we could get nothing. 3. It is marvellous condescension to hear at all. "Took down from thy holy habitation." 4. All that He bestows is from sovereign mercy. "Which thou hast given us."

### A MEMORABLE DAY.—*Verses 16–19.*

"This day" was a time of solemn admonition, of wonderful pledges between God and His people, and of deep spiritual significance.

**I. A day of beneficent deeds** (ver. 16). Laws had been revealed for worship and life. The people had vowed to God that they had liberally devoted "their hallowed things" to the needy. Distress had been relieved, hearts had been gladdened, and burdens removed. Giver and receiver had been thankful, and rejoiced together before the Lord.

**II. A day of solemn dedication to God.** "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God" (ver. 17). Their hearts had been weaned from idolatry and self. God's providence had brought them on their journey, and God's goodness enriched them with blessings. Gratitude bound them to God, and they pledged themselves not to forget nor disobey him. Canaan would have been a dark and dreary land without Him. His presence, like sunshine, fills all hidden recesses of life, and makes creation glad.

**III. A day of distinguished privileges from God.** God accepts His people's pledge generously, espouses them, and makes new discoveries of His love. 1. *In material pre-eminence.* "To make thee high above all nations." Eminence and honour come only from God. "Glory, honour, and immortality" are reserved in heaven for well-doing (Rom. ii. 7). 2. *In spiritual adoption.* He chose them to be His own special and "peculiar people" (verse 18). They were elevated in position and moral condition—brought near to God by obedience. Christians have a special place in God's regards on earth. In heaven the relation will be complete. 3. *In moral purity.* "That thou mayest be an holy people" (verse 19). This was the end of their obedience and exaltation. They were chosen to be holy (Eph. i. 4). Moral purity is the highest honour. Worldly greatness will never satisfy the cravings of the heart. Holiness is the admiration of friends, a terror to enemies, and the end of life. "All the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 16–18. Ready obedience and great reward. 1. *The law of God revealed.* Divine in origin, wonderful in history, authoritative in claims. These injunctions are not devices of men, but *commandments* of God. 2. *The voluntary obedience to law.* They

willingly and publicly avowed God to be their God. They were to do, not to dispute the commands. It is not enough to read and understand them. They must be sincerely, faithfully and universally kept. Not as the result of human energy, but of Divine in-

fluence (Ezek. xxxvi. 27). 3. *The expression of Divine pleasure at this voluntary obedience.* Jehovah reciprocates the feeling, "The Lord hath avouched thee." Natural and supernatural blessings are pledged in variety. Loyal obedience secures present favour, and will gain future honour and renown. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people."

Ver. 19. *High above all nations.* It is written, righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Prov. xiv. 34). While Israel regarded God's word, and kept His testimonies, they were the greatest and most respectable of all nations; but when they forsook God and His law, they became the most contemptible.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXVI.

Vers. 2-4. *First.* This is the rule of sacrifice—a costly precept to the worldling and the formalist. But to the servant of God, it is a privilege to lay aside a portion with the sacred stamp, "This is for God." This sacred devotedness is the true road to riches (Prov. xi. 24). God challenges us to "prove him now herewith," if the abundant harvest, and the overflowing vintage shall not put unbelief and covetousness to shame (Neh. iii. 10; 2 Chron. xxxi. 5-10).—*C. Bridges.*

Ver. 5. *Few.* Athens and Rome, Babylon and Persia, as well as England and France, rose by slow degrees to their unrivalled eminence. Whereas, the Huns and Vandals flashed in their terrible greatness for a few years, and passed unto oblivion as mysteriously as they rose into power.—*Dr. Brewer.*

Vers. 6-9. *Our affliction.* Suppose, Christian, that the furnace was seven times hotter, it is but to make you seven times better; fiery trials make golden Christians (*Dyer*). "God's children," says an old author, "are most triumphant when most tempted;

O Britain! even more highly favoured than ancient Israel, learn wisdom by what they have suffered. It is not thy fleets, or thine armies, howsoever excellent and well appointed, that can ultimately exalt and secure thy permanence among nations. It is righteousness *alone*. Become irreligious, neglect God's ordinances, profane His sabbath, despise His word, persecute His followers, and thou art *lost*.—*A. Clarke.*

Vers. 17-19. *Covenanting with God.*  
I. Our covenant engagements. 1. To accept God as our God. 2. To act towards Him as becomes us in that relation. II. Our covenant advantages. 1. God will own us as His people. 2. Bestow on us blessings worthy of that relation: holiness, honour, and happiness.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

most glorious when most afflicted; most in favour with God when least in man's esteem. As their conflicts, so their conquests; as their tribulations, so their triumphs"—

The good are better made by ill,  
As odours crushed are sweeter still.

*Rogers.*

Vers. 10, 11. *Rejoice.* Who partakes in another's joy is a more humane character than he who partakes in his grief.—*Lavater.*

All who joy would win  
Must share it—happiness was born a twin.—  
*Byron.*

Vers 12-14. *Done all.* People in general have no notion of mixing religion with common life—with their pleasures, with their meals, with all their thoughts. Hence it is they think that their Maker is an enemy to happiness, and that religion is fit for the closet only.—*Mayow.*

Ver. 15. *Look down.* Prayer and thanksgiving are like the double motion of the lungs—the air that is sucked in by prayer is breathed forth again by thanksgiving.—*Godwin.*



Vers. 16-19. *Above all.* Do not forget that greatness before men is sometimes littleness before God, and that every man who lives only to love God and to do good to his fellows is in the sight of his Maker truly great. It is honour and blessedness the greatest to belong to the army of Jesus Christ—to be holy, loving and faithful, a witness for God, an instructor in His House, a benefactor among men.—

(*J. E. Rosoman*). In the estimate of honour he should learn to value the gifts of nature above those of fortune; to esteem in our ancestors the qualities that best promote the interests of society, and to pronounce the descendant of a king less truly noble than the offspring of a man of genius whose writings will instruct or delight the latest posterity.—*Gibbon*.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Connect this chapter with verse 16 of preceding one, where Moses concludes discourse on plains of Moab. Here he dwells on sanctions of the law and sets forth in striking detail the blessings of obedience and curses of disobedience.

1-4. On the day of entrance into the land, stones must be erected and the law written on them. *Elders*, rulers, and representatives of tribes, prominent, because they would require what was due after death of Moses. *Great stones* fulfilled (Josh. viii. 30-32). *Plaster*. Daubed with paint or white cement to make conspicuous. Writing not to be cut into stone and then covered with slime. *All words*, not the Decalogue, nor the blessings and curses following, nor the Book of Deuteronomy, but all laws revealed from God by Moses, not historical, didactic and non-legislative matter in Pentateuch, but simply its legal enactments (*cf. Speak. Com.*). *Ebal*, the place specified for stones (chap. xi. 29). Now *Mad-el-daen*.

4-8. More details. *Altar*. None used in ordinary cases except brazen one at door of tabernacle, but on this occasion they were to renew the covenant and offer sacrifices. *Stones*, not covered with slime, but unhewn, according to Ex. xx. 25. *Offer* burnt offerings and peace offerings, symbolic of entire dedication and enjoyment of Divine grace.

8. Plainly. To read easily.

9-10. *Heed*. An appeal for attention. When the covenant was renewed and law set up in Canaan, Israel bound themselves to hearken and keep the commandments.

11-26. Form and manner of the solemn blessing and cursing. Tribes appointed to stand on Gerizim sprang from two wives of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel. All the four tribes located on Ebal, from handmaids Zilpah and Bilhah—Reuben is added, probably because he lost his primogeniture (Gen. xlix. 4); and Zebulun, because youngest son of Leah (*Speak. Com.*).

14. *Levites*. Only to speak aloud, *i.e.*, to pronounce the different formularies of blessing and cursing. In pronouncing benedictions they turned towards the multitude on Gerizim, from whom rolled back the *Amen*; in turning to Ebal, in distinct and solemn tone they received back the same impressive *Amen* in ratification of each blessing and curse.

15-25. Twelve curses against transgressions of the covenant. The first eleven directed against special sins, selected by way of example; the last comprehensively sums up in general terms and condemns all and every offence against God's law.—(*Speak. Com.*)

15. *Image*. (*cf.* 4, 16; Ex. xx. 4; Lev. xxvi. 1.) *Secret place* set apart as a shrine. This covers private as well as public image worship.

16. *Light*. Disregards, or lightly esteems parents (Ex. xxi. 17; Lev. xix. 3).

17. *Landmark*. (*cf.* Deut. xix. 14.)

18. *Blind*. Lack of consideration for suffering (Lev. xix. 14). *Perverteth*, taketh advantage of desolation (Ex. xxii. 21; Mal. iii. 5; Ps. lxxviii. 5).

20-23. (*cf.* Lev. xviii. 23; xx. 15.) Heinous sins springing from unlawful passions, destructive of bodily vigour and family bliss.

24. *Secretly*. To kill him (Gen. ix. 5).

25. *Reward*. (*cf.* Ex. xxiii. 7, 8.) For this section *cf.* Josh. viii. 30-35.

THE MEMORIAL PILLARS.—*Verses 1, 4, 9 and 10.*

Instructions are given for setting up pillars or stones, on which the law must be written. This was a common mode of publishing edicts or laws in ancient times. The design of these pillars is significant. They assert :

**I. The principle on which the Land was held.** “On the day,” when they had crossed Jordan, they must halt, erect great stones and remember their title deeds. The entering into the land, its conquest and permanent possession depended upon certain conditions. 1. *They took possession through God’s covenant.* That day they had become the people of God. He was about to give them the land which he had promised. 2. *They could keep possession only through obedience to that covenant.* “Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord” (ver. 10). The law is set up, the covenant solemnly renewed, and the national policy fixed. All progress and prosperity depend upon God. Obedience to him will give access to the land with its beauties and products, access to possession and gladness. Harkening unto his voice we succeed in all enterprises and positions. Never forget the terms on which you enter in. Everything is given in mercy and only kept by obedience—“That thou mayest go into the land.”

**II. The Perpetuity of the Divine Law.** “Write all the words of this law.” The law was unchangeable, adapted to Israel in the wilderness and in Canaan, to every nation and every age. We are apt to forget it. New conditions of life efface it from our minds. It must, therefore, be preserved and perpetuated—written not on pillars and parchments, but in the heart and life. “Written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

**III. The obligation to keep this Divine Law.** It must ever be prominent and lifted up before us. The covenant must not simply be ratified but kept. 1. *This is pressed with authority*—“I command you.” Not the mere act of Moses and the elders, but the expression of God. 2. *This is pressed with earnestness.* “Take heed and hearken, O Israel” (ver. 9.) Moses, the leader, is earnest. The priests and Levites are earnest. Feeling the obligation ourselves, we must be urgent in pressing others. Delight in God’s law and passionate concern for others should ever characterise ministers and leaders. The very name and calling impose responsibility upon God’s Israel. The Lord hath avouched thee to be his peculiar people and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments (ch. xxvi. 18 : Ex. xix. 5.)

THE STONE ALTAR.—*Verses 5-7.*

An altar was set up, besides monumental stones. No tool must be used in its preparation. Burnt offerings and peace offerings were to be offered as in the covenant of Sinai, and a festive entertainment was to follow. Notice the erection and design of this altar.

**I. The erection of the Altar.** Patriarchs erected an altar to express gratitude to God and confess dependence upon Him. 1. *The circumstances.* As soon as they entered into Canaan, the stones and altar must be fixed up. Many would counsel delay. They were in a strange place, surrounded by enemies, and must prepare for defence. God is our best defence. In every new situation, enterprise, and possession God must be first. Acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy steps. 2. *The material.* In rough material, without the touch of an iron tool (ver. 5). Perhaps to indicate that God requires no help from man in

making atonement for sin, no art and co-operation in setting forth his claims. Decorations in worship pre-occupy the mind, and may lead to idolatry. At any rate, nature is God's work, pure and holy. Man, by contact, may pollute it; hence the altar for expiation of sin must be free from taint and human corruption. "Thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Ex. xx. 25).

**II. The design of the Altar.** Burnt offerings were expiatory, signs of dedication of life and labours. Peace offerings were expressions of gratitude for benefits received, tokens of reconciliation with God. Both were offered to mark (1) Israel's gratitude for blessings of covenant relation; (2) Israel's determination to consecrate themselves wholly to God's service (*cf.* Ex. xxiv. 5). In the sacrificial meal they entered into blessings of divine grace and enjoyed ritual communion with God. Thus were they divinely taught and solemnly pledged by this public ceremony to carry out their sacred obligations. Sin must be expiated by sacrifice before we can have access to God. But God has made provision. In faith and obedience "thou shalt eat, and shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God."

#### THE STONES AND THE ALTAR.—*Verses 2-7.*

There is an intimate relation between the two, symbolic of spiritual truth—

**I. The stones represent the demands of law.** Stern and exalted, requiring perfect and constant obedience. Plain and adapted to man in its revelation—testifying against all disobedience. Law must exist—can never be abolished nor give life. It brings curse and condemnation.

**II. Altar represents atonement for violations of law.** Law has been satisfied in its demands. God has made provision for access, pardon, and peace. Without sacrifice there is no remission of sin. Law stands erect and unyielding as the pillars of stone. The altar indicates propitiation and grace. We are set free, redeemed from the curse of the law, that we may honour God in obeying it. By the stones *God* speaks to us; on the altar *we* sacrifice and speak to Him. Thus communion is real, vital, and complete.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 2, 3, 8. In these verses it appears that Israel set up a monument on which they must write "the words of this law." 1. The monument itself must *be very mean*; only rough unhewn stones covered over; not with polished marble or alabaster, nor brass tables, but with common plaster. The word of God needs not to be set off by the art of man, nor embellished with "enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor. ii. 4; Col. ii. 4). 2. The inscription *was to be very great*. "All the words of this law." Some say the ten commandments, others the five books of Moses, but probably only an

abridgment of the book of Deuteronomy or the blessings and curses here set down (*cf.* Josh. viii. 34).—*Wilson.*

Ver. 6. *Altar.* This atonement is introduced in the very midst of the moral law, that the people of Israel might be pointed forward to that great provision through which the breaches of that law might be forgiven, and in which strength might be found for obedience (*Cumming*). At all events, the stony pile was so large as to contain all the conditions of the covenant, so elevated as to be visible to the whole congregation of Israel; and the religious



ceremonial performed around it on the occasion was solemn and impressive—consisting, *first*, of the elementary worship needed for sinful men; and, *secondly*, of the peace offerings, or lively social feasts that were suited to the happy people whose God was the

Lord. There were thus the law which condemned and the typical expiation—the two great principles of revealed religion (*Jamieson*). *Very plainly*, ver. 8. Not very finely to be admired by the curious, but very plainly that he who runs may read.—*Mt. Henry*.

#### BLESSING AND CURSING.—*Verses 11–14.*

The curses only given, and not the blessings. For as many as were under the law, were under the curse. It was reserved for Christ to bless, to do what the law could not do.

**I. The special places.** Gerizim was one pulpit and Ebal another. Their isolated position made them naturally suitable for the occasion. (*cf. Stanley, Sinai and Palestine.*) But their moral import is significant. One may suggest bondage, another freedom. Both set forth what nature may become, a blessing or a curse, according to its use. Creation is in sympathy with man, responds to his moral condition, and is wasted or blessed by his moral conduct. “Things take the signature of thought.”

**II. The appointed agencies.** On the sides of the mountains the tribes were drawn up, six on one, and six on the other side. The priests pronounced, in loud tones, blessings and curses. On Gerizim were stationed descendants of Rachel and Leah. On Ebal the posterity of the two secondary wives of Jacob, Zilpah and Bilah, with those of Reuben, who had lost his primogeniture—the children of the bondwoman and the children of the free. (Gal. 4, 23.) The moral of the mountains is legible enough. Men, according to training, history and position, have power to do good or evil. Their ascent on the mount of wealth, learning and success, will be a source of blessing or curse to those below them. “I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing.” (Gen. xii. 2.)

#### CURSES AND RESPONSES.—*Verses 25, 26.*

Previous laws had prohibited these things, but now God openly declares a curse upon offenders.

**I. The curses pronounced against transgressors.** Twelve in number answering to the twelve tribes of Israel. The *first*, against those who make graven or molten images of Jehovah, and set them up in secret, that is to say, against secret breaches of the second commandment (Ex. xx. 4); the *second*, against contempt of, or want of reverence towards parents (Ex. xxi. 17); the *third* against removing boundaries (chap. xix. 14); the *fourth*, against leading the blind astray (Lev. xix. 14); the *fifth*, against perverting the right of orphans and widows (chap. xxiv. 17); the *sixth*, against incest with a mother (chap. xxiii. 1; Lev. xviii. 8); the *seventh*, against unnatural vices (Lev. xviii. 23); the *eighth* and *ninth*, against incest with a sister or mother-in-law (Lev. xviii. 9, 17); the *tenth*, against secret murder (Ex. xx. 13; Num. xxxv. 16); the *eleventh*, against judicial murder (Ex. xxiii. 7, 8); the *twelfth*, against the man who does not set up the words of the law to do them, who does not make it the model and standard of life and conduct. This last curse applied to every breach of law and proves that the different sins mentioned were selected by way of example and were mostly such as could be easily concealed from judicial authorities.

The office of the law is shown in this last utterance, the summing up of all the rest, to have been pre-eminently to proclaim condemnation. Every conscious act of transgression subjects the sinner to the curse of God, for which none but He who has become a curse for us can possibly deliver us (Gal. iii. 10-13).—*Keil.*

**II. The curses publicly ratified by the people.** It is easy to understand amen to blessings, but how could the people say it to curses? They felt and acknowledged the equity of them. The response was not a mere profession of faith in the truth of the curses, but an open declaration that they were just, true and certain. Their amen was the expression of deep conviction, the approval of law which brands sin with a curse. 1. *Scripture* says amen. 2. *Conscience* says amen. 3. *The universe* of God says amen. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "Just and true are thy ways."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 11-15. *A Wonderful Scene.*

1. The locality. Describe the valley between Ebal and Gerizim (*cf.* Tristram *Ld. of Is.* Bonar and Stanley). 2. The Actors, Priests, tribes and people distinctly, loudly and solemnly reciting their parts. 3. The audience. Their *position*, sat on sides of the mountains; *attention*, waiting in awful silence for the utterance. "Take heed" (ver. 9); *response*, "Amen." What a grand assembly! What a solemn purpose and how serious the consequences!

"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely  
players  
They have their exits and their en-  
trances, etc.

*Shakspeare.*

**Secret Sins.**—Most of the sins were secret, but are brought to light by the Omniscient Judge, and receive their just desert. 1. Men outwardly moral may be addicted to secret sins. 2. God will discover these sins, pronounce sentence, execute judgment upon them. "For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of

darkness, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."

Ver. 15. *Amen. A little word of big meaning.* 1. An acknowledgment of the supremacy of moral law. This law is a real force, above all contingency and human control. Right and wrong are eternal verities, written in the nature of things, and can never be altered. *Amen*, "so be it." 2. A confession of justice in the administration of His law. God is absolutely supreme, a law to himself. Right is not independent of his will, cannot be accomplished without his providence, what he wills must be done, *because* right. Dr. Payson once asked if he saw any special reasons for some particular event, replied, "No! but I am as well satisfied as if I could see a thousand. God's will is the very perfection of reason." "*Amen*, so be it." 3. A submission to the decisions of this law. These decisions may be opposed to our wishes and anticipations, but there is no injustice in the government of the world. "*Amen*, so be it." "Shall even he that hateth right govern, and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?" (Job. xxxiv. 17.)

### IDOLATRY, OR SINS AGAINST THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.—*Verse 15.*

This command against image worship in public or private, sets forth:—

1. The Spirituality of the Divine Nature. The words forbid any image of Jehovah in a material form. Other nations had images, regarded them with

superstitious veneration, and were influenced by seductive practice. But God will have no likeness of him, no representation, to becloud his spiritual essence or rank him with forms of matter. Images lower the conception of Deity, tend to make him the product of human thought and ingenuity, and degrade the worshippers. "God is a spirit" entirely separate from matter. "To whom, then, will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare to him?" (Is. xl. 18).

**II. The Spirituality of Divine Worship.** We are forbidden to worship God by graven images. 1. *In material forms.* This was prohibited in Rome by Numa, a Pagan prince, yet allowed by the Pope, a Christian bishop! Devotion to God must not be excited, directed and helped by pictures and crucifixes—symbols which are liable to take the place of truth symbolised and lead to sensual worship. "Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods." 2. *In fanciful forms.* Worship is often will-worship (Col. ii. 23). We fancy a God, cut and carve one like ourselves in our evil imaginations. Our worship is governed by the power of imagination, not the power of faith. "We are the offspring of God," our life is the breath of the highest life, and our moral nature makes us kin with Him. "We ought not to think that the godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts xvii. 29).

#### FILIAL DISHONOUR.—*Verse 16.*

This sin is against the fifth commandment. Obedience to God first, then respect for parental authority, which represents God.

**I. What these words imply.** First, lack of true affection. Then irreverence, disobedience, and defiance. If there be no love, no right feeling, children will soon dishonour and reproach their parents. It is more than uncharitable, uncivil or unjust, to withhold from them what is due. "In thee have they set light by father and mother." The instincts of nature, the demands of conscience, and the word of God, require honour to father and mother.

**II. What these words require.** Gratitude for existence, sustenance, and education. Love, trust, and filial fear. Submission to rebuke, instruction, and correction. Endeavouring to be comfort and support in time of need. Never to despise and mock our parents. "He that curseth father and mother, let him die the death." The poet Cowper expressed true feeling when presented by his cousin with a portrait of his mother. "I had rather possess that picture than the richest jewel in the British crown; for I loved her with an affection that her death, fifty-two years since, has not in the least abated."

#### MEN OF INJUSTICE.—*Verses 17–19.*

Three forms of cruelty and injustice are here given—

**I. An unjust neighbour (verse 17).** Removal of landmarks a secret way of injuring a neighbour and breaking the law of love—disregard to his will and property. An act springing from selfishness, pride, a spirit of oppression and covetousness. Disregarding the authority, and confusing the heritage God gave to families. An old form of dishonesty, robbing your neighbour to increase your own lands; tempting flocks and herds out of other folds into your own. "Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set" (Prov. xxii. 28).

**II. An unjust counsellor (verse 18).** It is specially cruel to impose upon the ignorant and defenceless—to misdirect the blind or cause them to stumble



by treachery, deceit, and wrong advice. To help the deaf and blind has always been considered an act of benevolence. Job "was eyes to the blind" (xxix. 15). Tenderness is enjoined by the apostle—"That no man put a stumbling block, or occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. xiv. 13). The deaf and blind may be unable to detect the offender and bring him to an earthly tribunal, but God hears when the human ear is deaf, and sees when the human eye is dark. "Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander."

III. An unjust judge. Widows and orphans have lost protectors. No advantage should be taken of their poor and helpless condition. Justice should be done to the *stranger*, ignorant of our laws and customs—to the *widow*, too poor and weak to secure legal advice. Judgment must never be perverted by bribes to judges, by sophistry of advocates, and by evidence false and manufactured. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation" (Ps. lxxviii. 5).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 15. *Images*. 1. Men eject God from heart and mind. 2. Make, set up, worship and keep rivals or antagonists. 3. This command, forbidding all false gods, would bring man into right attitude with God. *Craftsman*. A profession sinful, degrading and dangerous.

that the first step was contempt of parental authority and restraint. If not literal fulfilment, often retributive judgment late, but certain, in disappointed hope, poignant anguish and corrections from their own sins (Jer. ii. 19).

Ver. 16. *Setteth light*. Notice the close relation between reverence to God and reverence to parents. Cursing a parent was punished as blasphemy against God (Lev. xx. 9). *Unnatural despisers of parents* in many ways; resistance to authority—contempt of reproof, denying obligation—needless exposure to sin. Every village bears testimony to this crying sin. Solon asked why he made no law against parricides, replied that he could not conceive of anyone so impious and cruel. God knows man better. The heart is capable of wickedness beyond the imagination of the heathen sage. *Cursed*. Absalom self-willed and rebellious against his father, made a reproach before the people (2 Sam. xviii. 9-17). Confessions on scaffold

Vers. 17. *Landmark*. 1. Every man has certain rights—political, social and religious. 2. These rights should be respected—not to be removed. They are sacred and inalienable. We have plenty of liberty in our own sphere without encroaching upon the rights and in the boundary of others. 3. Violation of these rights, sinful and risky. Intense selfishness—social injustice—disregard of divine order and will bring a curse. "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark."

Vers. 17-19. *Principles of humanity*. 1. Respect for rights of property (ver. 17). 2. Tender regard for the unfortunate (ver. 18). 3. Justice administered to the helpless (ver. 19).

#### SINS OF UNCLEANNESS.—Verses 20-23.

Sins which spring from lust destroy the sacredness of the human body and dissolve family relationships. Learn—

I. That men have a tendency to commit great sins. Judgment is perverted, the heart alienated, and the power of evil habits drives men deeper into self-

corruption. The blackest crimes have disgraced humanity—incest, adultery, robbery, fratricide, and murder. Pride has been in active conflict with personal and social liberty. Covetousness has dried up the wealth of provinces and the sources of enterprise. Sensuality has wasted the strength and manhood of the people. "Pleasure has mounted the throne and shame departed from the heart." Paul's terrible indictment (Rom. i. 16-32) is not more severe than that of Tacitus and Seneca—"All things are full of crimes and vices."

**II. That this tendency has existed in all ages.** It is not the birth of modern civilization, but old as human nature itself. In Jewish and Gentile world, in corrupt and enlightened ages man is the same the world over. The principles that prompted to these crimes are alive and at work in every unregenerate heart in the present day. Moral corruption invariably follows religious debasement. "For this cause God gave them up unto vile (shameless) affections (passions); for even their women (who lost modesty, a priceless jewel) did change the natural use into that which is against nature," &c. (Rom. i. 26, 27).

**III. That God seeks to preserve men from great sins.** By His *word*, with its fearful warnings, threatenings, and promises. By His *spirit*, enlightening the mind, discovering dangers, renewing the disposition and destroying the tendency to evil. By His *providence*, in putting barriers in the way, checks to prevent crime; and by His *grace*, to form and strengthen habits and efforts the very opposite. Sins of the deepest stain, and the most inveterate strength may be overcome. "My grace is sufficient for thee." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

#### MURDER.—*Verses 24, 25.*

Two kinds of murder are here mentioned, secret murder and judicial or murder under colour of law.

**I. Murder is an offence to God.** It may be secret and undiscovered, but the curse of God rests upon it. If bribed or hired to convict and condemn the innocent; then it makes the ordinance of God to patronise villany and shame (1 Tim. i. 9.) Man is "made in the image of God." Not simply life, but *the man himself* is sacred and divinely guarded. To destroy the work is to dishonour the workman. "Thou shalt not kill."

**II. Murder is an injury to society.** Men owe duties to one another as well as to God. Respect for life is one of the first duties. Murder destroys the security of life, defeats the primary object of human government, brings disgrace to the murderer and entails suffering upon the murdered and his relations. Society is outraged by the crime, and its welfare demands the punishment of the criminal. "He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death."

#### THE DEMANDS OF GOD'S LAW.—*Verse 26.*

In general terms this verse sums up all offences against the law. In itself and in its connection it is instructive, not subordinate truth, ornamental and non-essential. Reference is made to it in the New Testament, as a vital fundamental truth, lying at the roots of the Gospel, and setting forth the permanency of moral obligation.

**I. God's Law is the standard of duty.** It legislates for individuals and nations in all relations of life; it comprehends every duty, and touches every act. 1. *Divine in origin.* Not of human invention. No mere conventional rules made by civil governors, by priestcraft, and by philosophers. Not as the edict of a master mind did Moses publish the law, but as the distinct utterance of God Himself. "The Lord talked with them from the heavens, and God spake all the words of this law." 2. *Spiritual in nature.* The law is spiritual, originating from the spirit of God and appealing to the spirit of man. It relates not merely to outward acts, to parental discipline, social custom, and civil government, but to "the thoughts and intents of the heart." It demands right feelings and right thoughts. Christ tells us that it is heart-life which determines our guilt or innocence in the sight of God (Mt. v. 21, 28). 3. *Clear in its demands.* Spoken distinctly, and appealing to the senses at Sinai (Ex. xix. 16). Written plainly on the pillars (ver. 8), and now printed for us. We cannot plead ignorance nor mistake; we cannot complain of uncertainty and want of light to guide us in worship and the discharge of duty. The law is high as the summit, loud as the thunders, and bright as the flames of the mount on which it was given. It is holy, just, and true.

**II. Obedience to God's Law must be perfect.** It requires us not only to abstain from wrong, but to do that which is right. 1. *Perfect in extent.* "All the words of this law." There must be no choice, no omission, no extenuation. Actual breach of one involves neglect and contempt of all. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point (one commandment), he is guilty of all, *i.e.*, becomes liable to condemnation under indictment which includes all particular commandments of the law (Jas. i. 10.) 2. *Perfect in duration.* There must be a confirmation, a *continuation* in every act of life. For under the covenant of works to break down only one moment, even the last, is to be lost. "Obey my voice and do them, according to that which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God" (Jer. xi. 4).

**III. Imperfect obedience to God's law will bring a curse.** Who has given or can give *perfect* obedience in every thought, word and deed? The blot of a single sin on a character pure as that of an angel would seal our doom. "Do and live" is the voice of law, "but the soul that sinneth shall die." No middle sentence between these two and not a whisper of mercy. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Every mouth is stopped before God. All are guilty and exposed. We must either continue in misery, bear the curse, or appeal from law to gospel. It is terrible to be cursed by men, but to be cursed by God, who never errs in judgment, nor ceases to warn—what must this be! But "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 19. 1. A dependent class, objects of pity. "The stranger, fatherless, and widow." 2. Advantage is often taken of this class. This law is repeated, indicating strong inclination among the Hebrews to ill use strangers, and anxious desire in the legislator to

check it. The same tendency discovered in modern days.

Vers. 20-23. 1. *Abominable crimes.* Common in Canaan and Egypt, to the last degree of unnatural mixture. Condition of Sodom, and passages in



Pauline epistles, confirm the corruptions of the heathen world. 2. *Awful consequences if not checked.* (a) Men demoralised by lust and bestiality. (b) Laws of consanguinity violated by illicit intercourse and incestuous marriage. (c) Social retribution follows. Land unproductive by sloth, luxury and effeminacy of the people. The country an easy prey to the foreigner (Persia, Turkey). (d) The anger of God displayed. God curses such crimes by nature, providence, and conscience.

Many a crime deem'd innocent on earth  
Is registered in heav'n, and these, no doubt,  
with a curse annex'd.  
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,  
But God will never.

—Cowper.

Ver. 26. From this we see that every precept of the holy law is equally obligatory, and that he that is guilty of a breach of one is guilty, not merely of breaking an individual law, but of

insurrection and rebellion against the Great Author and Inspirer of the law—the Lord God of Israel. We thus learn that the breach of one precept is regarded by God as an impeachment of His jurisdiction and authority as King and Lord. View sin then not lightly, not as a mere breach of an isolated law, but as insurrection against the Great Law-giver himself. This truth also disposes of the principle of the Pharisee, that excessive and scrupulous attention to one law was an atonement for daily disobedience to another. The more we study the law, the more searching, inquisitive and comprehensive we find it. What a solemn truth, that all born into the world are born in the eclipse, by nature under the curse. “By deeds of law no flesh shall be justified.” If you feel convinced of sin, condemned in your heart, flee to Christ. For what the law could not do, that God hath done in his son, etc.—*Dr. Cumming.*

# ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXVII.

Vers. 2-4. *Write.* Stones and even rocks are seen in Egypt and the peninsula of Sinai, containing inscriptions made 3000 years ago, in paint or plaster, of which, owing to the serenity of the climate, the coating is as firm and the colouring as fresh as if it had been put yesterday.—(*Jamieson.*) I have seen numerous inscriptions of this kind of writing more than 2000 years old, and still as distinct as when it was first inscribed on the plaster.—*Thomson Ld. and Bk.*

Vers. 9, 10. *Heed.* God esteems our actions and works, not according to the greatness or exactness of the performance, but according to the sincerity and truth of our hearts in doing them (*J. Meade*). Child-like obedience moves towards every command of God, as the needle points the way the loadstone draws. If God calls to duties which are cross to flesh and blood, if we are children, we obey our Father.—*Watson.*

Ver. 15. *Image.* Yet man—this glorious creature—can debase His spirit down to worship wood and stone, and hold the very beasts which bear his yoke and tremble at his eye for sacred things.—*Landon.*

Ver. 16. *Father.* It is certain, whatever can be signified by fear and honour and reverence, is the duty of children—that is, so far as to think honourably of parents—to speak well of them, to conceal their faults, to excuse them to others, and to comport themselves with reverence and great regard before them. Grieve them in nothing; this is the sweet measure.—*J. Taylor.*

Ver. 17. *Removeth.* Covetousness debaseth a man's spirit.—*Archbishop Tillotson.*

“Desire of having is the sin of covetous-  
ness

—Shakspeare.  
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Ver. 18. *Wander*. Deceit is only a game played by small minds.—(*Corneille*). *Cursed*. It is a double pleasure to deceive the deceiver.—*Fontaine*.

Ver. 19. *Judgment*. I mistrust the judgment of every man in a case in which his own wishes are concerned.—*Wellington*.

Vers. 20-23. *Evil passions and lusts*. "If I had but character," said Mirabeau, "if I had but been a good man, if I had not degraded my life by sensuality, and my youth by evil passions, I could have saved France."—*Farrar*.

"Passion is the drunkenness of the mind."  
—*Spencer*.

Vers. 24-25. *Slay*.

"Murder may pass unpunish'd for a time."  
But tardy justice will o'ertake the crime.  
*Dryden*.

Ver. 26. *Law*. The main strength and force of a law consists in the penalty annexed to it.—(*Blackstone*). Hard and imperious law has not a word of encouragement for the sinner, not a grain of sympathy, not an atom of help—nothing but an awful threat of judgment and fiery vengeance on his failure. President Garfield truly said "Coercion is the basis of all law. A law is no law without coercion."—*T. Griffith*.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Moses now enlarges and gives the blessings and curses in detail (*cf.* Ex. xxiii. 20-23 and Lev. 26.) The blessings are declared in fourteen verses; the curses require nearly four times as many. Thus here again the curse is the more conspicuous feature in the law *Speak. Com.* Obedience the condition of blessing and this is repeated at beginning (verse 2) middle (29) and close (verses 13, 14) in positive and energetic form.

1-6. Blessings actual powers which follow and overtake them in all relations of life. *Field* (verse 3; Lev. xxvi. 3.) *Body* (verse 4), *i.e.* children. *Basket* (verse 5) for carrying articles for personal use (Deut. xxvi. 2). *Store lit.* kneading-trough, in which daily bread is prepared (Ex. xii. 34). *Comest* in all journeys or affairs and administrations (Num. xxvii. 17; Deut. xxxi. 2; 2 Sam. iii. 25).

7-14. Effects of blessings expressed in the optative forms earnestly desired. *May* the Lord bless, etc. *Conquest* over enemies (verse 7). *Flee* in rout, in many ways. *Storehouses* (verse 8) underground generally (Lev. xxvi. 7, 8). *Exaltation* (verse 9). *Holy* (Ex. xix. 5, 6; Deut. vii. 6). *Called* (verse 10) rightly and truly a most excellent and favoured people. *Plenteous* (verse 11) *lit.* shall make thee abound in good, superabundance for good, *i.e.* for happiness and prosperity (*cf.* 30, 9.) *Treasures* rain and fruitful seasons. *Head* (verse 13) independent in power and dignity (Is. ix. 14; xix. 15). *Tail* not vassals. (Verse 14) emphatic conditions on which blessings depend.

15-19. Curses proclaimed in sixfold repetition, the exact counterpart of blessing almost. "The special modes in which these threats should be executed are described in five groups of denunciations," verses 20-68. (*Speak. Com.*)

20-26. *First group. Cursing* (*cf.* Mal. ii. 2) on all they do, issuing in various forms of disease, famine, and defeat in war. *Vex*. Confusion, as armies in defeat (*cf.* vii. 23; 1 Sam. xiv. 20), *Pestilence*. Fatal epidemic (1 Kings viii. 37; Amos iv. 10). *Consumption*. Wasting sickness, not European phthisis. *Fever*. Acute disease. *Sword*. Others drought or heat; curse rests on vegetation. *Brass* (verse 23). Hard, dry, and shut up from giving rain. *Dust* shall fall like showers—dry, and as a burning sirocco (verse 25). *Smitten* (*cf.* Lev. xxvi. 17; Is. xxx. 17). *Remov'd*. [Not dispersion among heathen, but driven from one place to another without settlement. *Meat* (verse 26), a great horror, the case with many Jews in Antiochian persecution (Ps. lxxix. 2).

27-34. **Second Group.** Loathsome diseases, and humbled and oppressed by calamities. *Botch*, black leprosy, peculiar to Eg. (Ex. ix. 9). *Emerods*, fistula or piles. *Scab*, scurvy. *Itch*, most malignant in East. Verse 28. Mental ailments, bewilderment, and paralysed with terror. *Mad* (Jer. xxv. 16-18). *Grope*, like the blind, in painful uncertainty (Is. lix. 10). Verse 30. Utter spoliation. Everything dear taken and not *restored* (verse 31). *Might*. All help would fail (Gen. xxxi. 29).

35-46. **Third Group.** As such diseases separated from men so Israel would be separated<sup>r</sup> rejected by God and brought under the dominion of strangers. **Knees.** Incurable leprosy, affecting joints, extremities, and whole body. **King.** A prophetic anticipation. No king given under Mosaic system. **Serve.** Seduced or compelled by idolatry as in Assyrian and Babylonish captivity (Jer. xlv. 17-19).

38. In their own land curse would rest upon labour and enterprise (Mic. vi. 15; Hag. i. 6; Joel i. 4). **Worms.** Weevil destructive to vines. Vers. 43, 44 compare with vers. 12, 13 **Sign** (ver. 46). A warning to other nations. **For ever.** A remnant would return to faith and obedience (Rom. ix. 27; xi. 5).

47-57. **Fourth Group.** More severe calamities are described in subjugation to a foreign foe.

49. **Nation.** Some think the Chaldeans. "But it needs only to read this part of the denunciation and to compare it with the narrative of Josephus' De Bell. Jud. VI. to see that its full and exact accomplishment took place in the wars of Vespasian and Titus against the Jews, as indeed the Jews generally admit." *Speak. Com.* **Eagle.** Roman ensign (*cf.* Mt. xxiv. 28). **Fierce** (ver. 50). Strong of face (*cf.* Dan. vii. 23), upon whom nothing would make impression. The foe would consume cattle, besiege towers, and so distress them that they would eat the fruit of their body, *i.e.*, their own children (2 Kings vi. 24-30; Jer. xix. 9). The effeminate man would have an *evil eye*, *i.e.*, envy toward a brother who had *nothing left* to give to the revolting vials.

55. The tender woman would be led to appease hunger by her *young one*, her after-birth, and then with her children.

58-68. Ultimate issue of the curse in uprooting Israel and dispersing them if obstinate in rebellion *Book* the Law or Pentateuch. The diseases of Egypt would decimate them remarkably fulfilled in persecution and war. God, who had done them good, would rejoice over their destruction; those who survived would be scattered (*cf.* Lev. xxvi. 33; Jer. xvi. 13; Eccles. xlviii. 15; Jos. De Bell. Jud. VI. ix. 2). They would find no rest (*cf.* Jer. xxvi. 36; Amos ix. 4). Life would be suspended on a mere visible thread, which might be snapped any moment (ver. 66). Brought out of Egypt by mighty power, they would be carried back in slave ships and become bondmen.

## NATIONAL OBEDIENCE AND UNIVERSAL PROSPERITY.—Verses 1-6.

National obedience would be rewarded with extraordinary prosperity.

**I. Prosperity in city and country** (verse 3). The *city* needs God in business; councils, boards, and counting-houses would never increase and prosper without Him. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that (are builders of it) build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. cxxvii. 1). The *field*—such a contrast from the city, for "God made the country, but man made the town"—needs God's sunshine and shower. In trade and agriculture they would prosper if obedient.

**II. Increase of population and of cattle** (verse 4). "The fruit of thy body." A numerous offspring was promised to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 17). Children healthy and happy "are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Ps. cxxvii. 3). There should be increase in cattle, kine, and flocks of sheep, and the ground should produce enough to keep them.

**III. Abundant supply of the necessities of life.** In their basket and in their store they would never want—enough for personal and domestic use, no scarcity in anything. "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."



**IV. Safety in all journeys.** "When thou comest in and when thou goest out" (verse 6). We need constant protection on sea and land, in train and market traps. What wrecks, what accidents we read of! How we depend upon God! Never safe, never easy, if He suspends His favour! If He bless, go where we will and engage in what trade we like, all is well. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."

EFFECTS OF DIVINE BLESSING IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE.—*Verses 7-10.*

The effects of God's blessing, like the influence of gentle showers, would be diffusive and rest upon them in all circumstances and conditions of life. This is seen in three relationships, to their enemies, to trade, and to other nations.

**I. Supremacy over enemies** (ver. 7). They shall be smitten and put to flight in various ways. A small number would over-match a mighty host. On God's side we are on the right side. "God and one man are always a majority" says one. "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

**II. Success in all undertakings.** "In all that thou settest thine hand unto" (ver. 8). In all handicraft and labour, in what they had and in what they did they would be blessed. If rich, we must not be idle. Accumulation of wealth may be accumulation of sorrow. Life which may be a continual feast may be a constant vexation if not faithful to God. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, etc."

**III. Increase of national glory.** This glory is special, universal and certain.

1. *In renewed covenant.* God would exalt them in character and position according to the oath which he made from the first. An oath never forgotten, but specially mentioned and confirmed for help and encouragement to His people. They were a peculiar and special treasure unto Him above all people.
2. *In exalted holiness.* "An holy people unto himself" (ver. 9). He not only takes them, but keeps them in the covenant. Establishes them in holiness and truth. This is the highest honour. Outward prosperity decays like a flower, withers away like Jonah's gourd; but the glory of holy character and conduct is a glory that excels.
3. *In great wealth.* "Thou shalt lend unto many nations and thou shalt not borrow" (ver. 12). The borrower is always servant to the lender. But they would have money to lend, never be reduced to straits, to dependence upon others—never become victims of cruelty, nor even objects of sympathy.
4. *In mighty power.* "The head and not the tail." Never servile, but always supreme. "Above only rising in wealth, dignity, and power, and not beneath." This realised in the time of David and Solomon. Loyalty to God is the way to ascendancy among nations. "The ancient and honourable he is the head."
5. *In universal favour.* "All people of the earth shall see and be afraid of thee" (ver. 10). When God is with us, and his glory reflected in holy life, men reverence our grandeur and fear our authority. The nearer to God, the greater our influence over men. An obedient holy Church would be a formidable power, "terrible as an army with banners." All people would see its spiritual distinctions, feel its moral force and mysterious influence (Acts ii. 43; iv. 13; Jos. ii. 10, 11. "There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land."

WONDERFUL BLESSINGS.—*Verses 1-14.*

**I. Blessings extensive in their character** (vers. 3-7). Given to Israel first, but for every nation that fears God and keeps His commands. Reaching into

the future and enduring for ever. 1. *Wide in their sphere.* For family and city, social intercourse, business and war. Comprehending everything needful for a nation's wealth, health, and happiness. 2. *Abundant in variety.* Rain in its seasons, increase of cattle and flocks, increase of men and of honour. Temporal and spiritual in going out and coming in, upon individuals, households and possessions.

**II. Blessings certain in their bestowment.** Not merely by the soil of Canaan or the laws of Nature; but by special promise and special providence "Thy God *will* set thee on high." "All these blessings *shall* come upon thee." We speak of "the reign of law," and forget that all laws physical or spiritual are ordained and controlled by one supreme lawgiver. Fidelity to God prompts to right use of means and reaps the results of natural laws. "All things work together" (in harmony, not in opposition) for good (as the result) to them that love God" (Rom. viii. 28).

**III. Blessings conditioned in their enjoyment.** Not given at random and without special design. The conditions of their tenure are plain—1. *Attention to God's will.* "If thou shalt hearken diligently"—eager and diligent attention given to every word of God. 2. *Obedience to God's commands.* "To observe and to do all His commandments"—obedience habitual, sincere, and devout. 3. *Perseverance in good.* Unswerving in principle, apostacy would provoke divine judgments. These are the conditions, repeated in positive and negative form, in verses 2, 9, 13, and 14. "Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them" (ver. 14).

#### IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF LIFE.

We may sum up the preceding thoughts in a brief sketch of the principles which ought to influence our conduct.

**I. That our future happiness largely depends upon our present conduct.** "If thou shalt." Man is free to choose, obedience is not forced. Life and death set before us, which shall it be? "Choose ye."

**II. That obedience to God alone will secure this happiness.** God has pledged this; a kind providence fulfils the pledge, sends blessings in *time* and *place* where most needed.

**III. That therefore obedience is the best policy for nations and individuals.** There is intimate connection between conduct and destiny, between morality and worldly prosperity. Regard to our own interests, to divine law, and to the future welfare of the country urge decision for God—*instant and earnest decision.* "For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life, and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *The happy journey.* I. *The direction indicated,* "overtake thee." 1. Started for God and His service, or could not be overtaken. 2. Obedient to the guide. The voice heard. God's will revealed in Scripture or could not

be fulfilled. 3. Progress made. No loitering, no standing still, constantly going on. II. The blessings which accompany those who walk in this direction. All good things mentioned shall come upon them, overtake

them and rest upon them in every stage of their journey—"Unexpectedly befall thee. 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow thee' (Ps. xxii. 6), as the evening sunbeams follow the passenger, as the rock-water followed the Israelites in the wilderness and overtook them in their stations (1 Cor. x. 4). 'O continue,' or draw out to the length, 'thy loving kindness unto them that know thee' (Ps. xxxvi. 11). 'There will be a continued series, a connexion between them to all such.'"—*Trapp*.

Ver. 5. *Store*. Cicero saith, one friend should wish to another three things only, to enjoy health, to possess honour, and not suffer necessity. He that observeth God's commands, shall have all these and more.—*Trapp*.

Ver. 7. *The routed enemy*. This is a world of conflict. Incessant war between truth and error. This verse describes I. The enemy's attack. 1. It was united: gathered into one force; 2. Concentrated. II. The enemy's defeat. 1. Not a strategic movement; 2. But a disorderly flight (*ill*. morning at Waterloo: the evening cry—"Let him save himself who can"). III. The cause of the defeat. 1. Not by the courage of Israel, or sagacity of leaders. 2. But the help of God.

Divine help is sometimes most apparent (*ill*. Armada scattered by storm). Learn (1.) To serve God in times of peace, and then (2.) you may safely trust him in times of war.—*Bib. Museum*.

Vers. 9, 10. *Israel's pre-eminence*. 1. In relationship to God. 2. In temporal prosperity, abundant harvest, etc. 3. In the influence over international counsels. Ver. 10. *Be afraid*. The homage of the world to moral worth. God's name, God's glory reflected in human character, will not merely command respect, but receive the homage of conscience, and conversation—Nebuchadnezzar and Darius and Daniel, Herod and John, Pharaoh and Joseph.

Ver. 12. *Heaven God's storehouse*, earth depends upon this storehouse—Canaan especially required rain. God keeps the key, opens and shuts according to his good pleasure, to discipline and train the people.

Vers. 12, 13. 1. *God in Nature*, giving rain and fruitful seasons. II. *God in history*, bestowing wealth to individuals, exalting nations to dignity favouring the good and confounding the evil.

#### DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS PENALTIES.—Verses 15-20.

The curses are given as counterparts of blessings (vers. 16-19) in sixfold repetition, covering all relationships of life, corresponding to verses 3-6—Learn:

I. If men are disposed to act rightly, they may be happy. Difficulties lie not in the Lord, in the providence or in the sovereignty of God; all things are ready with him, but men are unwilling. Jerusalem "would not." Obedience is the surest way to happiness. "Righteousness tendeth to life." Walking in the precepts we enjoy the promises of God. God appeals to us, seeks to dispose, not to compel us to do right, "Will ye?" If we serve him, we find that in the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof is no death.

II. If men persist in doing wrong they may be ruined. "If thou wilt not hearken." 1. *Ruined in business*. "In city and in field," in commerce and agriculture (ver. 16). If we love gain and forget God, our schemes may be upset and security taken away. "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right" (Prov. xvi. 8). 2. *Reduced in daily necessities*.



"Cursed in basket and in store" (ver. 27). God gives daily bread, sends scarcity and want at his pleasure. Life is sustained, not by bread only, but by his will. If in the midst of plenty, we offend God, the blessings may be turned into curses. 3. *Disappointed in family prospects*. No fruit of the body: or if children, sickness, and death cut them down in early bloom. No lambs for the flock, no increase of kine; God does not bless and multiply them, but suffers cattle to decrease and disappoints expectations. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just" (Prov. iii. 33). 4. *Unsafe in journeys* (ver. 19). A kind providence watches over a good man; but the wicked, through imprudence and neglect, often meet with mishaps. God alone can make our journey prosperous (Gen. xxiv. 21), and for this a Christian will pray (Rom. i. 10). Such are some of the ways in which a man may be ruined. The very reverse of former prosperity and a sure indication of God's providence.

III. Hence persistence in wrong doing is most foolish. Heedless, impetuous, and thoughtless, stripped of all they esteem valuable, exposed to mischief, and deaf to divine learning, sinners go on to their doom. Conduct most reckless and most criminal! God expostulates but in vain. Fighting against God and their own interests! What monstrous folly! What infinite mercy to prevent irremediable destruction. "Ye fools, when will ye be wise?"

#### FIRST GROUP: SIN AND SUFFERINGS.—*Verses 20-26.*

Judgments are grouped together in series. Examine each in order. From the first group, learn—

I. That sin brings miseries. Sin and suffering are bound together by iron chains. This is—1. *A doctrine of Scripture*. "He that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death." "The wages of sin is death." 2. *A law of nature*. "Curses never come causeless." Sin is violation of natural order, and suffering must follow as season follows season. 3. *A Divine appointment*. Misery springs not from the dust, but is linked by Divine decree to evil doing. Moral laws are as certain in operation and results as natural laws. We cannot evade the issues of conduct; the seed determines the nature of the crop, and the sowing the reaping.

II. That the miseries of sin are often most distressing. What a list in these verses! 1. *Consuming pestilence*. *Cleaving* unto men, cemented and inseparable—defying the skill of the physician and the efforts of sanitary authorities. 2. *Manifold bodily diseases* (ver. 22). Germs of disease float in the atmosphere, and are developed by the conduct of depraved men. Moral poison destroys physical beauty and life, and covers the body with sores and diseases. 3. *Terrible drought*. Destroying vegetation by "blasting and mildew" (ver. 22). Early and latter rain withheld, and the earth hard and incapable of cultivation. Heaven above as brass, and earth beneath as iron. The surface of the ground reduced to powder, which is taken up by strong winds and poured down in showers of destructive violence (ver. 24). 4. *Defeat in war*. A nation ever victorious through God, bereft of his help, *smitten* by the enemy; *fleeing* away in disgrace; "*removed* into all the nations of the earth," or left on the field exposed to indignity, "meat unto all the fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth" (ver. 26). Sin brings ruin—ruin in everything connected with the sinner—ruin in body and soul, in family and estate. We

best serve our own interests, and preserve our well-being, for this world and the next, by acting in conformity with God's word.

“When sorrows come,  
They come not single spies,  
But in battalions.”—*Shakspeare*.

#### ABOVE AND BENEATH.—*Verses 23-24.*

These words have a moral application and may typify spiritual dearth.

**I. Above abundant supplies.** A storehouse full of good things, ready to be poured out. The Holy Spirit and showers of divine blessings. “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and *floods* upon the dry ground.”

**II. Beneath, parched ground.** The ministry needs quickening. The Church languishes. Failure of effort and lack of conversions. The vineyard of God unfruitful and the world perishing. “Popularize your societies” is the cry of many; we say *vitalize* them. “I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness.”

**III. How to remove the sterility.** It is not designed to be permanent.

1. *Forsake sin.* This brings blight and curse. “He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.”
2. *Pray to God.* “Prayer,” says Robert Hall, “is a spring which the Almighty never fails to touch when He has a rich blessing to communicate to His church.” Unexpected and marvellous things may be witnessed through prayer. “Prove me now herewith, said the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 20. **The Threefold Curse.** Cursing, vexation, and rebuke.

1. *Moral in its cause.* “Wickedness of thy doings . . . Thou hast forsaken me.”
2. *Extensive in its scope.* “In all that thou settest thine hand unto.”
3. *Long in its duration.* “Until.”
4. *Terrible in its end.* “Destroyed.” “Perish quickly.” . . . “The *first* of these words seems to import that God would blast all their designs; the *second* relates to disquiet and perplexity of mind arising from disappointment of their hopes, and presages of approaching miseries; the *third* respects such chastisements from God as would give them a severe check and rebuke for their sins and follies.”

Ver. 22. **Seven Plagues.** What a fearful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God!

Vers. 23, 24. **The pitiless storm.**

1. Endangering life, blinding eyes, filling nostrils and mouth, making it difficult to breathe and drive in the street.
2. Creating intense thirst; the lips crack, and no water to slake burning thirst.
3. Affording no shelter; often no bush, no rock, no friendly house to hide from the fierce simoon.—*Cf. Dr. Porter, and Ld. and Bk. II. 311, Thom.*

SECOND GROUP: THE POWER OF GOD IN THE AFFLICTION OF MEN.—*Verses 27-3*

Once the sinner having set himself against God, he of necessity suffers in mind, body, and estate. The primitive laws of nature become executors of God's power and judgments.

**I. God's power displayed in human life.** God is absolutely supreme, a law unto Himself and does what He will among men. 1. *In the human body* (ver. 27). God, who built our body, can smite it with disease; acute and loathsome; torture every nerve, and render man hideous from "the sole of the foot to the crown of the head." 2. *In the human mind* (ver. 28). Mental sufferings are greater than bodily. If the mind is smitten and reason dethroned, man is down and no physician can help him up. With a healthy body, elevated desires and happy prospects, we may triumph over physical suffering. But when body and mind are tortured, how terrible! "A wounded *spirit*, who can bear?" 3. *In the social circle* (ver. 30). Wife, house and vineyard, everything most dear would be touched and taken by the curse. Sin robs of family joys and family status. Domestic comfort, reputation and property all go. Often from heights of worldly greatness, families fall to the lowest depths of degradation and distress. "For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this" (2 Chron. xxix. 9).

**II. God's power displayed in national history.** Nations are but men, governed by the providence, according to the purpose of God. He can dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. God has power. 1. *Over the possessions of nations.* "Vineyards" are planted by Him. Sheep and oxen; "the cattle on a thousand hills are His." A nation's property may be great, constantly accumulating, and apparently secure, but if unjustly gained, ungratefully held or wickedly abused, God may give it to the "enemies and thou shalt have none to rescue" (ver. 31). "He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them; He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth (carrieth them away) again (Job xii. 23). 2. *Over the population of nations.* God builds up a people in number, as well as in material wealth. But "He breaketh down and it cannot be built again." Vice poisons the blood and destroys the life; war, famine and pestilence waste the inhabitants of nations. Posterity, to whom are committed the interests of commerce, the defence of the throne and the glory of our name, are often cut off by divine judgments. "I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord."

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

**III. God's power irresistible in its displays.** Israel would *see* their children carried captives but have "no might in their hand" to rescue them, and would pine away in sorrow (ver. 32). 1. *Powerless to resist His doings.* Power is seen in creation, sustenance and government of the world. "He is mighty in strength," the force of all forces, in heaven and earth. "Men shall speak of the *might* of thy terrible acts." "I will work and who shall *let* it" (hinder, or turn it back) Is. xliii. 13. 2. *Powerless to resist his purpose.* No man, no combination of men can prevent the fulfilment of His plan. "He is of one mind, and who can *turn* Him?" Can a pebble hinder the advancing tide? God moves on in majestic power. Nations are futile in their rage and opposition. "If he cut off and shut up (*i.e.* arrest and imprison), or gather together (call an assembly for judgment), then who can hinder Him?" (Job xi. 10). What folly to resist God. "Why dost thou strive against Him?" Has He done you harm? Can you succeed? Submit, avoid the curse and secure the blessing."



HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 28, 29. *The dreadful power of suffering.* "Smite thee with madness." God's judgments reach the mind as well as body and estate, make men a terror to themselves and drive them to desperation.

*Blindness*, physical and mental, loss of sight and confounding of understanding. Unable to devise means to prevent or remove calamities, and led to adopt those which tended directly to their ruin. How true the saying, *Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat* "Those whom God wishes to destroy, he first infatuates." What a warning to nations! What an awful type of wicked men!

*Judicial Blindness.* 1. When truth is rejected. 2. Moral light intellectual and spiritual withdrawn. And 3. Moral vision entirely obscured (*cf.* Rom. xi. 18; 2 Cor. iii. 4). "They met with (run into) darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night (Job. v. 14).

Vers. 27-34. *Elements of Distress.*

1. Personal annoyances (ver. 27).
2. Mental derangement (ver. 28).
3. Providential reverses (a) In domestic life (ver. 30). (b) In commercial life (vers. 31-33). Distress indicating Divine agency. Divine severity.

THIRD GROUP: THE REJECTION AND DEGRADATION OF ISRAEL,—*Verses 35-46.*

We have here solemn gradation of evils. Confusion and anarchy, uniting with oppression, produce madness of heart; disease pursues its ravages in most malignant forms; labour and enterprise are blasted by the curse, and the nation sinks into total disgrace and ruin.

I. Israel would be cut off from fellowship with God (ver. 35). From "the sole of the foot unto the crown of the head" they would be smitten with loathsome and incurable disease, "a sore botch that cannot be healed." Leprosy cut off from the society of man, so Israel would be excluded from fellowship with God.

II. Israel would become impoverished at home. 1. *The fruits of the land would be consumed.* Locusts would devour the seed. They might carry much into the field, but would reap little (ver. 28); the planting and dressing of the vineyard would give no wine to drink, for the worm would devour the vine (ver. 39); the trees would yield no oil to anoint, but would be uprooted or destroyed (ver. 40). 2. *They would fall into an inferior position.* They would have to borrow money instead of lending (ver. 44); strangers would rise above them in wealth and social rank, "become the head, and they would be the tail;" their condition would be the opposite to verse 13. 3. *A curse would rest upon their children.* Children may deteriorate through sin, and carry in their persons the curse of God to future generations. "And upon thy seed for ever." Israel as a nation would be rejected, but a remnant would be saved (*cf.* Is. x. 22; vi. 13; Rom. ix. 27; xi. 5).

III. Israel would be a terror to spectators. "For a sign and for a wonder" (ver. 46). God's doings are not simply *wonderful*, but *signs* of supernatural interposition, illustrations of spiritual truth. Never was a people such a sign as the Jews, whose seed for thousands of years have been a wonder over the face of the earth!

IV. Israel would be brought under subjection to a foreign Power. 1. *They were taken into captivity* (ver. 36). Their kings—Jehoiachin (2 Kings, xxiv.

12, 14), Zedekiah (2 Kings, xxv. 7, 11), and Manasseh (2 Ch. xxxiii. 11)—were taken away by foreign nations. Edward III. had the King of Scots and the King of France captives together. Monarchs with body-guards and means of protection cannot escape the vengeance of God. How hopeless that case when the defender shares the fate of the subjects! 2. *They were forced to serve other gods.* As in Babylon and in Popish countries. "Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favour" (Jer. xvi. 13).

V. Israel would become a byword among nations (ver. 37). Jews have been despised among Mahometans, Pagans, and Christians. There is scarcely any part of the globe where the prediction has not been verified. "In short, the annals of almost every nation, for 1800 years, afford abundant proofs that this has been, as it still is, the case, the very name of Jew being a universally recognised term for extreme degradation and wretchedness, and is often applied by passionate people in derision—'You Jew!'" "And now am I their song; yea, I am their byword" (Job xxx. 9).

#### GOD'S CONTROL OVER NATURE.—*Verses 35 and 38-42.*

I. In the material department. Earth with its produce, in fields and vineyards—heaven with its sun and its showers, are under the superintendence of God and governed in the interests of men. The heavens satisfy the earth and the earth yields its increase to men; but all things in heaven and earth depend upon God. "So that without His bidding," says Calvin, "not a drop of rain falls from heaven, and the earth produces no germ, and consequently all nature would be barren, unless he gave it fertility by his blessing." "How long shall the land mourn and the herbs of every field wither for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."

II. In the intelligent department. Over the bodies and minds of men. The beauty of the one and the vigour of the other. The strength of the limb (ver. 35) and the use of reason (ver. 28) come from Him. The condition of the parents and the fate of the children are fixed by His providence (ver. 41). God directs and controls all forces and all agencies to accomplish His designs. None are beyond the reach and none can escape the punishment of God. "All troubles," says Bishop Reynolds, "have their commission and instructions from Him—what to do, whither to go, whom to touch, and whom to pass over."

#### PARENTAL DISAPPOINTMENT.—*Verse 41.*

I. Parents anticipate great things from children. Dutiful conduct and reverence, joy, advancement, honour and prosperity. Gratitude, needful help and preservation of family name.

II. Parents are often disappointed in their children. Sometimes cut down by early death. They often turn out badly, a curse instead of a blessing. They are taken captives by evil habits and evil company—because disloyal and unnatural. "God help me, my own children have forsaken me," said James II. who stands forth a type of a deserted father. "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."

HOMEILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 35. Diseases. 1. Painful. 2. Degrading. 3. Incurable (*cf.* Is. i. 4-6).

Ver. 37. *A Proverb.* 1. A fact. 2. A dishonour. 3. A punishment. 4. A witness to prophetic truth. What a fall from the original mission of Israel. "Poets, dramatists, have all taken the Jew as the personation of what is mean, grasping, and avaricious ("Greedy as a Jew." "Avaricious as a Jew"). Yet he is not more so, intrinsically, than we are; it is circumstances that have made him so; it is persecution and ill-treatment that have crushed him. And all this is the fulfilment of prophecies old as the days of Moses, and yet not the justification of his persecutors." — *Dr.*

*Cumming.* This teaches two important lessons: *First*, he explains this severe persecution, permitted by God to fall upon them because they were set up as a model nation chosen from heathendom, enriched with privileges, glory and position. But they were untrue, forsook God; and the height of the dignity to which they were raised, is the measure of the depth of degradation to which they have sunk for abuse of it. *Secondly*, how impossible to escape the conclusion that the Book of Deuteronomy is inspired! The predictions in this chapter, and in the ensuing one, are so specific, so literal, that they carry in their own bosoms the tests of inspiration.—(*Idem*).

FOURTH GROUP: DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD RESULTING IN SERVITUDE TO MAN.  
*Verses 47-57.*

Every department of national life has been under the curse; yet, in love to His people and earnest desire to preserve them from wrath, the faithful servant of God goes further, and pictures greater severity in bondage to heathen yoke. Having forsaken God, they were left in servitude to man.

**I. If Israel would not obey God, they would be compelled to serve enemies.** "Because thou servedst not the Lord, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies" (ver. 47, 48). 1. *Serve in hunger and want.* "In hunger, thirst, nakedness and in want of all things." "Man's life," says Calvin, "is not shut up in bread, but hangs on the Sovereign will and good pleasure of God." He can withhold bread, take away water, create natural and spiritual distress in schools, churches, and nations. 2. *Serve in vigorous oppression.* "He shall put a yoke of iron about thy neck" (ver. 49). Instead of the easy yoke of God, they would be slaves to a cruel foe (*cf.* Jer. xxvii. 11, 12). Those who refuse reasonable service to God, will have to bow to the tyranny of sin.

**II. These enemies would be most barbarous and cruel.** This description might apply to the Chaldeans when compared with Moabites, Philistines and other neighbours in Judea, but the Romans answer best to it. 1. *Enemies which scorn the distant foe.* They came "from far," from France, Spain and Britain—then considered the end of the earth. 2. *Enemies which defy the strength of battlements* (ver. 52). All fortified places to which the people escaped were taken, and the walls of Jerusalem razed to the ground. 3. *Enemies which have no pity for the people.* "Not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young" (ver. 50). Josephus says the Romans had no mercy for infants and spared neither sex nor age. Cruel and insensible to human instincts. 4. *Enemies of ruthless vengeance.* "Fruit of thy cattle, fruit of thy land," all consumed. The invader destroyed everything within reach, every



district through which they passed was strewn with wrecks of devastation. 5. *Enemies of sudden approach.* Swift as an eagle—the ensign of the standards of the Roman army—pouncing violently upon its prey. It is true morally and physically that “where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

III. In their distress and siege Israel would be driven to horrible extremities (vers. 53-57). 1. *Famine would lead them to eat the fruit of their own body* (ver. 53). Fulfilled 2 Kings vi. 25, 28, 29; Lam. ii. 20; iv. 10; Baruch ii. 3; and in the Roman siege. 2. *Famine would create domestic jealousy.* The man of luxury would envy his relatives if better off than himself; or avoid them in jealousy and fear lest they should discover and demand a share of his unnatural viands. “In every house where there was any appearance of food, the dearest relatives fought each other for it—even mothers their infants.”—(Josephus). 3. *Famine would destroy natural affection.* The delicate and sensitive woman would be unrestrained by natural affection and appease her hunger with her offspring and afterbirth. In the siege of Samaria, a woman boiled her son (2 Kings v. 28, 29), which was also done in the siege by the Romans. Famine was so terrible, that “for want of all things,” the leather of girdles, shoes and shields, and even stale dung of oxen were eagerly devoured (cf. Ezek. v. 10; Jer. xix. 9). Such were the awful consequences of forsaking God.

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,  
So fast they follow.—*Shakspeare.*

Thus woe succeeds woe, as wave a wave.—*Herrick.*

#### HOMEILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 47. *Joyful Service.* I. Its Motive. God's goodness in personal mercies, family mercies, spiritual mercies. II. Its embodiment in secret and social devotion, in songs of praise, grateful offerings and loyal obedience. Here we have duty and favour, “the duty of delight,” as a modern writer would say, labour and sunshine. “The love which does not lead to labour will soon die out; and the thankfulness which does not embody itself in sacrifices is already changing to ingratitude.”

Vers. 47, 48. *The dread alternative.* God or man, with joyfulness or in want, etc.

Vers. 49-52. *Foreign conquest.* I. The foe described swift, cruel and

strong. II. The mischief he commits. III. The impotence to resist.

Ver. 52. *Confidence in strongholds.* Jews seldom ventured to fight in open fields. They trusted to *high and fenced walls*. In a special manner they confided in the strength and situation of Jerusalem, as Jebusites, former inhabitants did before them (2 Sam. v. 6, 7). Vain is the confidence of the sinner. His stronghold a refuge of lies (Is. xxviii. 15). Divine Retribution. 1. Discovers every subject. None can hide from God. 2. Overturns every stronghold. 3. Penetrates every place. “Prince's palaces are not *above*, the poor man's cottage is not *beneath* the judgment of God.” God is the only stronghold in whom we should trust. Christ is the refuge, flee to him!

#### THE GLORIOUS AND FEARFUL NAME.—*Verse 58.*

The name of Jehovah most prominent here to check the downward course, secure glory and regard. Pause and consider its nature and demands.

**I. A Name revealed in Scripture.** Not known to patriarchs, or if known not understood in its fulness and blessing (Ex. vi. 3). It was a preface to the law (Ex. xx. 2) and a special revelation to Moses (Ex. iii. 13-15; vi. 3), indicating a God faithful and self-existent, absolute being, and infinite perfection; a Name above every name, never to be uttered without reverence, the sanctity of which aggravates crime against it. It is the scriptural, the theocratic name of God.

**II. A Name written in Nature.** In letters of burning splendour in heaven above and earth beneath; "glorious" in goodness and "fearful" in power. In thunder, lightning, and earthquake we have displays of power and majesty. Men speak of laws and forces of nature; true science discerns God, and spells his name in all departments (*cf.* Ps. civ.): "For that Thy name is *near* Thy wondrous works declare" (Ps. lxxv. 1).

**III. A Name illustrated in Providence.** It has been vindicated and honoured in history—1. *In displays of power.* "Twice"—*i.e.*, again and again in his providential government of the world—"have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God" (Ps. lxii. 11). God repeats the lesson if man will only hear (Job. xxxiii. 14). 2. *In displays of judgment.* In Egypt and Babylon, in the Flood, in the destruction of Sodom and Jerusalem, God's "judgments are manifest" (Rev. xv. 4). 3. *In displays of mercy.* Mercy as well as power belongs to God (Ps. lxii. 12); mercy consonant with justice—mercy to the obedient and justice to offender. "The name of the God of Jacob (the manifested power and faithfulness of the God who saved Jacob in the day of trouble (Gen. xxxii.) defend thee (*lit.* exalt, set thee on high and in a secure place))" (Ps. xx. 1). Thus have we a continual manifestation of this memorial name (Hos. xii. 5). "This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations (Ex. iii. 15).

#### FIFTH GROUP: OBSTINATE REBELLION BRINGS UTTER RUIN—Verses 58-68.

These are not expressions of vindictive feeling. God delights to bless, not to curse. But they describe natural consequences of transgression. In its beginning, progress and ultimate issue fearful is rebellion—constant rebellion against God.

**I. Obstinate Rebellion increases calamities.** Sin unpardoned develops new symptoms, and as the evil grows greater miseries follow. 1. *It prolongs and intensifies those we have.* "The Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, great plagues of long continuance (ver. 59)." God must rule. Afflictions are not taken away until the desired end is accomplished, verses 23, 20. 2. *It brings others upon us.* "Every plague not written will the Lord bring upon thee," ver. 61. God has infinite resources. As in the case of Job the climax is terrible. "Thou renewest thy witnesses (*marg.* plagues) against me, and increases thine indignation upon me; changes and war (successions and a host, *i.e.*, one host succeeding another) are against me" (Job. x. 17).

**II. Obstinate rebellion turns God's love into anger.** His procedure towards men is changed by their disobedience. 1. *In rejecting His people.* "As the Lord rejoiced to do good so will he rejoice to destroy, bring to nought and pluck off" (ver. 63). The loss of children, the decay of prosperity and future hope grievous. But when God withdraws His presence and providence, nothing can sustain a church or people. Awful to be forsaken of God. To have his countenance turned from us and against us in trouble—to have frowns instead of

smiles, must be hell and not heaven. "Woe also to them when I depart from them." 2. *In scattering them abroad.* "The Lord shall scatter thee among all people," etc. (ver. 64). Uprooted from Canaan, and driven to wander homeless to the ends of the earth. If no true allegiance to God, country, societies, and creeds cannot unite and secure. "The Lord scattered them abroad" (Gen. xi. 8). 3. *In reducing them to slavery.* "Ye shall be sold for bondsmen" (ver. 68). Once they marched triumphant out of Egypt, but they would return as slaves in the ships of Tyre, Sidon, and Rome (*Josephus*). Those who live in luxury often lose their liberty and become reduced to servitude—servitude disgraceful and most severe. "So they came into the land of Egypt, for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord" (Jer. xliii. 7).

**III. Obstinate rebellion endangers human life.** "Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee" (ver. 66). Endangers. 1. *By grievous suffering.* Diseases of Egypt were brought upon them. Often acute *physical* disease, hideous and loathsome. Sometimes *mental* agony, sorrow of mind extinguishing the hope of life, or rendering it impossible to bear. "The days of affliction have taken hold (fast hold) upon me (as armed men besieging a city) a sad contrast to former days (Job xxx. 16). 2. *By constant risks.* There was no *assurance*, no certainty of life (ver. 66). Dangers, real and imaginary, create constant fear. Life's thread may break. Its length may be unexpected and strong, but time will cut it down. "For live, how we can, yet die we must."—(*Shakspeare*.) 3. *By premature death.* Wickedness shortens life. "The evil that men do," as well as the good, "lives after them." "Deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Ps. lv. 23). Sin by its own nature and the righteous judgments of God upon it, bring men to untimely ends; but piety contributes to the length and enjoyment of life. "The fear of the Lord longeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Prov. x. 27). Sinner, stop lest thy sin rise to presumption and forbearance end in certain death! "Neither be thou foolish; why shouldst thou die before thy time?" (Ecc. vii. 17).

**IV. Obstinate rebellion destroys all remedy.** Wilful opposition to the word of God leads to judicial blindness and destruction. When God abhors, he will soon abandon. Mighty population, regal sovereignty, military prowess and national prestige will be smitten like a flower. No remedy, no security against the judgment of God but submission. That kingdom is strongest, most splendid, and most secure which makes God its sovereign. Otherwise hated, forsaken, cast away! Divorced from God, forsaken of God. "I will love them no more."

Heaven gives the needful, but neglected call.  
What day, what hour, but knocks at human hearts,  
To wake the soul to sense of future scenes.

—Young.

#### GOD-FORSAKEN LIFE.—Verses 63–68.

When God withdraws, nothing can sustain a church or nation. When the ark of God was taken Ichabod was pronounced. Present affections only foreshadow future judgments. "Woe also to them when I depart from them."

**I. A life of bitterness and sorrow.** 1. Bitterness in mind and heart. Conscience stings and fears alarm. Sin is bitterness and gall. Lord Byron declared that his days were "in the yellow leaf," the flowers and the fruits were gone, "the worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone." 2. Bitterness in condition and prospect. Without ease, peace and comfort now (ver. 65) and nothing



better in the future. "I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope," said the poet Burns, in dying hours.

**II. A life of bondage and misery.** Bondage to lust, evil habits, and fear of death. Misery is ever linked to sin; like a scorpion, vice brings its own torment (Rev. ix. 5). Whatever the sinner does, he finds no relief. "Which way I move is hell, myself am hell," Milton makes Satan say. "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart."

**III. A life excluded from God's Inheritance.** "Plucked off the land" and driven into captivity and death. Sin drove man from Eden, and idolatry the Jews from Canaan; so unbelief and rebellion will exclude from heaven. Sinners cannot enter the kingdom of God on earth, and will be disinherited at last. What a warning to all in the bosom of the Church and under the sound of the Gospel! How sad a godless life! "I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, 'Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?'" (Deut. xxxi. 17).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 58. *The Divine Name*—1. In its glorious nature: "glorious and fearful." 2. In its covenant relation: "the Lord thy God." 3. In its requirements upon life: "that thou mayest fear." *The duty of fearing God.* I. What God requires of us. That we regard him (1) with reverential awe; (2) with obedient love; (3) with undivided attachment. II. What we must expect at his hands if we comply not with his requisition; our plagues also shall be wonderful (ver. 59)—(1) here; (2) hereafter.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

Vers. 59–64. *Great evils.* 1. Smitten by the judgment of God with sickness severe, long and increasing (vers. 59–62). 2. Rejected in the covenant of God (ver. 63). "Greatly as the sin of man troubles God, and little as the pleasure may be which he has in the death of the wicked, yet the holiness of his love demands the punishment and destruction of those who despise the riches of his goodness and long-suffering; so that he displays his glory in the judgment of the wicked no less than in blessing and prospering the righteous" (*Keil*). 3. Scattered by

the providence of God (ver. 64). 4. Forced to reject the worship of God. "Thou shalt serve other gods" (ver. 64)—lifeless, senseless gods, which hear not prayer nor deliver from distress.

"When sorrows come  
They come not single spies  
But in battalions."

Ver. 63. Great must be wickedness which provokes God to reject and hate His people. Notice, 1. *Exclusion from the blessings of the covenant.* Driven from the house of God, loss of outward privileges and position. God deprives sinful nations of prestige and position, removes their candlestick for ingratitude, and casts them off for wickedness. 2. *Uprooted from the land.* God plants and uproots. He can overturn a people as well as pluck up a tree. Nations may have flourishing trade and nobility grand mottoes, but God can destroy their prosperity root and branch; leave them without power to revive inwardly or outwardly. We cannot flourish without God. "He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living" (Ps. lii. 5).

NO REPOSE IN A GODLESS LIFE.—*Verse 65.*

When Israel forsook God He forsook them. The predictions were fulfilled, and they were worse than fugitives and vagabonds in the earth, without settlement and ease. There is no repose in a Godless life.

I. This truth is illustrated in Jewish history. The Jews have been driven from land to land; from Russia, Poland and Spain. For 1800 years or more, they have been homeless, restless, and wretched—a byword and a proverb.

II. This truth is confirmed by experience. God is the centre of rest, the fountain of bliss, and away from Him we can never find peace. “Thou madest us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it repose in thee” (*Augustine*).

1. *The ungodly find no satisfaction in sin.* Sin is disorder, disease, and creates dissatisfaction, bitterness, and anguish. Lord Chesterfield “run the silly rounds of pleasure,” but had “no wish to repeat the nauseous dose.” There is no peace to the wicked; their hearts are “like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Is. lvii. 20, 21). 2. *The ungodly find no comfort in affliction.* They are full of fear and of “tossings to and fro.” Distracted with anxiety, accused by conscience and tormented with guilt, they have restless nights and wearisome days. Sleep, the gift of God, and “tired nature’s sweet restorer,” never refreshes them. Phantoms of horror terrified Tiberius and Caracalla, and fearful visions murdered the rest of Nero. “When I say, my bed shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams and terriest me with visions” (Job vii. 4, 13). 3. *The ungodly have no hope in death.* “No ease” nor foundation “for the sole of the foot” on the rock. Solon’s maxim not far wrong—“Call no man happy till death.” Whatever life may be, “What is the hope of the hypocrite (godless person), though he hath gained, when God takes away (cuts off, 6, 9; Is. xxxviii. 12) his soul?” (Job xxvii. 8). There is rest in Christ, hope in the Gospel. Come and believe—“Ye shall find rest.”

Who builds on less than an immortal base,  
Fond as he seems, condemns his joys to death.

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 65. *Triple sorrows.* 1. *A trembling heart*, as opposed to a fixed and courageous heart. A heart without dread of detection, disgrace and punishment. “Virtue is bold and goodness never fearful.”—(*Shakspeare*). 2. *Failing of eyes.* Weary of darkness and light, day and night a terror. When the eyes of the soul are put out, the spiritual universe is midnight and despair. “The eyes of the wicked shall fail.” 3. *Sorrow of mind.* Mental agony depriving of rest, affecting health and spirits. “Full of scorpions is my mind.”—(*Shakspeare*).

Better be with the dead  
Than in the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy.—*Shakspeare*.

Ver. 66. *Life in suspense.* “Hang in doubt, *lit.* “thy life shall be hanging before the, *i.e.* shall be hanging as it were on a thread, and that before thine eyes.”—(*Speak. Com.*) This might be taken as a *warning*. (The sword of Damocles). Take it as a fact. 1. Because naturally uncertain. 2. Because constantly endangered. Risks through guilt, disease, enemies, and divine judgments. Take warning, the thread may be cut any moment. What indifference? “Though death be before the old man’s face it may be behind the young man’s back.”—(*Seneca*). Serious things to-morrow cost Cæsar and Archias their lives.

Ver. 67. *A sad picture of a weary life.* Deprived of comfort—of physical health and mental vigour under the curse of God. Such a life intolerable. “I loathe it” (Job vii. 16). Let us learn from this chapter that our supreme interest is to cultivate the friendship

and obey the word of God. Then blessings and not curses! Blessings here, blessings for ever!

Well may your hearts believe the truths I tell;  
’Tis virtue makes the bliss where’er we dwell.  
—*Collins.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXVIII.

Vers. 1-6. *Prosperity.* Some years ago, when preaching at Bristol, among other notes I received to pray for individuals, one was this—“A person earnestly desires the prayers of this congregation, who is prospering in trade.” “Ah!” said I to myself, here is a man who knows something of his own heart; here is a man who has read the scriptures to some purpose.”—*Jay.*

Vers. 7-10. *Blessing upon thee.* God gives us what we have, not so much that we may have it, but that we may do good. Everything in life, even the best earned rewards, are seeds sown for a future harvest.—*Bengel.* Ver. 9. *Keep.* The virtue of Paganism was strength; the virtue of Christianity is obedience.—*Hare.*

Ver. 13. *Above.* As long as time endureth there will be distinction of rank, not simply for the weal of the great, but for the economy and safety of the world.—(*E. Davies*). True elevation does not consist in the elevation of nature, in the material or exterior hierarchy of beings. True elevation, an elevation essential and eternal, is one of merit, one of virtue. Birth, fortune, genius, are nothing before God.—*Lacordaire.*

Vers. 28, 29. *Madness* is the last stage of human degradation. It is the abdication of humanity. Better to die a thousand times.—*Napoleon I.*

Ver. 30. *House.* If men lived like men indeed, their houses would be temples—temples which we should hardly dare to injure, and in which

it would make us holy to live.—*Ruskin.*

Ver. 31. *Rescue.* As the net does not spring up without catching the bird, can ye imagine that when destruction passes by, ye will not be seized by it, but will escape without injury.—*Hitzig.*

Ver. 34. *Mad for sight.* A man in great misery may so far lose his measure as to think a minute an hour.—*Locke.*

Ver. 36. *King.* The lot of a de-throned king, who was born a king and nothing more, must be dreadful. The pomp of the throne, the gewgaws which surround him from his cradle, which accompany him step by step throughout life, become a necessary condition of his existence.—*Napoleon I.*

The king’s name is a tower of strength,  
Which they upon the adverse party want.  
—*Shakspeare.*

Ver. 37. *A proverb.* Reputation is gained by many acts, but is lost by one.—(*Bacon*). It is hopeless to recover a lost reputation.—*Idem.*

The purest treasure mortal times afford  
Is spotless reputation; that away,  
Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay.—  
*Shakspeare.*

Vers. 45 46. *Wonder.*

Think not the things most wonderful  
Are those beyond our ken;  
For wonders are around the paths,  
The daily paths of men.—*Hawthorne.*

Ver. 47. *Joyfulness.* I have often read my duty and my sin in this verse.



Notwithstanding innumerable proofs of His munificence how deficient our songs in number, and how languid in performance! In the commonest engagements of life, and in our daily enjoyments was sweet ingredient mingled, it would really enhance the worth of everything, however otherwise inconsiderable.—*Dr. W. Hamilton.*

Return, my senses range no more abroad,  
He only finds his bliss who seeks for God.—  
*Parnell.*

Vers. 59–61. *Long continuance.*

One woe doth tread upon another's heel  
So fast they follow.

—*Shakespeare.*

Thus woe succeeds woe, as wave a wave.

—*Herrick.*

Vers. 53–57. *Eat.* During a famine in Italy A.D. 450, parents ate their children. Eaters of human flesh—(*Anthropophagi*)—have existed in all ages.

Ver. 63. *Rejoice to destroy.* The wrath of man is the rage of man; but the wrath of God is the reason of God.—*Bp. Reynolds.*

Famine has a sharp and meagre face.  
'Tis death in an undress of skin and bone.—  
*Dryden.*

Not thou, O Lord, from us, but we  
Withdraw ourselves from thee.  
—*French.*

Ver. 58. *Fear.* Disobedience is the beginning of evil, and the broad way to ruin.—*D. Davies.*

Ver. 66. *Hang.* My life hangs by a single thread; but that thread is in a Father's hand.—*J. H. Evans.*

## CHAPTER XXIX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—The discourse is continued—the subject of that is the covenant of Israel with God—its privileges conferred and obligations imposed. *Besides* (ver. 1), not a new covenant, but repetition, renewal of the old at a suitable time.

2-9. Obligation to obey on account of what God had done for Israel. All Israel. Represented by Elders (*cf.* ver. 10). **Temptations.** Testings, provings (*cf.* iv. 34; vii. 19). **Not given.** They felt no want and did not ask. This complaint not to excuse weakness, but to direct them in right course. I (ver. 5). Jehovah introduced as speaking. Clothes and shoes preserved classified with the gift of manna, therefore better understood, not as a natural supply from flocks and herds, but as a miraculous act. **Know** (ver. 6). Practical knowledge of God, design of this goodness, ver. 7; *cf.* ii. 32; iii. 1; ver. 8; *cf.* iii. 12, 13. 9. **Prosper.** Lit, act wisely (xxxii. 29; Jos. i. 7; 1 K. ii. 3. "The connexion of wisdom in conduct and prosperity in circumstances is noteworthy" (*Sp. Com.*).

10-15. Summons to enter the covenant afresh that they may really be God's people. Your tribes, lit. your captains, your tribes, your elders, etc. The word "tribes" apparently denotes all not in office. All were represented if not present. **Stranger** represents all foreign servants bought with money (Ex. xii. 44) or taken in war. **Little ones** represented by parents or guardians. Menial servants not excluded. None exempt from the terms of national covenant, which embraced not only those living, but posterity (ver. 14).

16-29. Once more denouncing rejection in case of apostasy, or breach of covenant. Ver 16, 17 not parenthetic as in the A.V. Ver. 18 stands in close connection not with ver. 15, but with what immediately precedes. The people are reminded (vers. 16, 17) of what they had witnessed in Egypt and on the journey, of the vileness of idolatry, and that experience is urged (ver. 18) as a motive for shunning that heinous sin (*Sp. Com.*) **Idols** (ver. 17), *lit.* clods or stocks which can be rolled about (Lev. xxvi. 30). Ver. 18. **Root**, a picture of destructive fruit of idolatry. Gall, hemlock (Hos. x. 4; Am. vi. 12), **Wormwood** (Jer. ix. 15; Lam. iii. 19), both terms indicate distress and trouble resulting from sin; ver. 19, bless, congratulate himself; *imagination, lit.* in firmness, hardness of my heart (from Hebrew word, to twist together, to be tough or firm). **Add**, a proverbial expression, rather difficult, denoting the addition of indulgence and sin to the desire, or that the drunken lead astray others who have only desire."

20-21. Such cannot escape God's anger, which, like smoke, breaks forth in fire (Ps. lxxiv. 1) ; blots out (ch. ix. 14, xxv. 19, Ex. xvii. 14).

22-23. Effects of sin would blast the once rich and flourishing region ; future generations astonished would ask the meaning of this devastation (ver. 24), and would receive the reply. the strokes of God had smitten the land and its inhabitants. Ver. 29 expresses humble submission and solemn warning. **Secret**, hidden things belong to God, counsels and purposes concerning nations, reasons of his dealings with them, together with time and methods, &c. ; revealed injunctions, threatenings, and promises are things with which we have to do which we should teach our children.

### SPIRITUAL DULNESS.—*Verses 1-9.*

God had done marvellous things for Israel, yet they were unchanged and disobedient ; insensible to miracle and unable to discern the purpose of God in his dealings with them.

**I. God performs striking events in man's history.** Israel's history was eventful from beginning to end. 1. *Wonderful deliverance.* Egypt was plagued, they were set free ; some were smitten, they were preserved. "I gave people for thy life." 2. *Continual guidance.* They knew not, could never have discovered the way, but they were not lost. "I have led you" (ver. 5). God guides in the residence, journeys, and enterprises of life. 3. *Daily support* (vers. 5 and 6). Food and raiment. Their little stock, increased by Egyptian gifts and the spoils of Amalekites, by a distinguished act of grace was preserved for forty years. 4. *Victory over enemies* (ver. 7). So now God delivers from fear, temptations, and persecutors. 5. *Acquisition of inheritance* (ver. 9). Land taken from their enemies to enrich them. "Land is a part of God's estate in the globe ; and when a parcel of ground is deeded to you, and you walk over it, it seems as if you had come into partnership with the original Proprietor of the earth."—*H. W. Beecher.*

**II. These striking events reveal God to men.** "That ye might know that I am the Lord your God" (ver. 6). They manifest God, and are designed to educate and train us to obedience. 1. *In terrible judgments.* "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth." 2. *In signal mercies.* God bestows favours to lead us to repentance and faith. Turn from speculations to facts. Our life is not shaped by fate, nor directed by chance. It is crowded with mercies and judgments—events which reveal the hand of God, illustrate the blessing of obedience and the danger of sin.

**III. Men do not always understand these events.** Israel had not "a heart to perceive and eyes to see," notwithstanding their wonderful history and varied experience. How does this happen ? 1. *Because they are thoughtless.* We must think, to feel—seek, to know. We can never comprehend without thought, nor discern God without meditation. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out by them that have pleasure therein." 2. *Because they are alienated in feeling.* If we take no interest in a person, we do not wish to know and serve him. If our hearts are alienated from God, we are blind to his manifestations in nature. We lose power "to retain God in knowledge" (Rom. i. 28), become void, spiritually stupid, whatever our boasted science and philosophy. 3. *Because judicially blind.* Neglect or abuse any faculty, it is taken away. Shut your eyes and you cannot see, close your hearts and you cannot feel. Vision without perception, hearing without instruction, is the result of sin and the appointment of God. "Go unto this people and say—Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand," etc. (Is. vi. 9 ; Acts xxviii. 24, 27).

IV. When men will not understand these striking events they are guilty. No excuse whatever. There was no want of evidence and no lack of instruction. They could not say let God speak louder, fuller, or oftener. Every form of lesson, in every available method, was given. 1. *The events are revealed to the senses.* Israel saw the destruction of their enemies. The pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire—the glory of God were visible. But nothing will touch the heart if the eyes are closed. “Unto thee it was shewed that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God.” 2. *The events are interpreted by God’s Word.* Newspapers are needful, but an intimate acquaintance with scripture will help to solve the problems and discover the meaning of life. Providence and scripture are pages of the same volume, one expounds what the other performs. “Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord and read” (Is. xxxiv. 16). 3. *The events may be understood by prayer.* God teaches when we apply to Him—gives knowledge and wisdom to those who lack and seek (Jas. i. 5-7). In this school did Joseph and David get their learning. If dull, God will teach us, and “who teacheth like him?” So patiently, so gratuitously and so efficiently. His lessons are grandest in their nature and most vital in their interests. Let us listen and learn; let us see and understand. If we close our eyes to the wonders of life and our hearts to the appeals of the gospel we may be given up to spiritual hardness and helplessness. “Make the heart of this people fat, etc.’

#### MEN’S BLINDNESS IN SPIRITUAL THINGS.—Verse 4.

Consider this complaint—

I. As uttered by Moses against the people of his charge. They had “seen” with their bodily eyes all the wonders that had been wrought for them. They understood not. 1. The true character of that dispensation. 2. The obligations which it entailed upon them.

II. As applicable to ourselves at this day. 1. By the great mass of nominal Christians the nature of the gospel is very indistinctly seen. 2. The effects of it are very partially experienced. Address—(1.) Those who are altogether blind. (2.) Those who think they see. (3.) Those whose eyes God has opened.—C. Simeon, M.A.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *Renewed covenant.* 1. This needful for us. (1.) When its conditions are violated. (2.) When placed in fit circumstances. Israel in Horeb and about to enter the land. (3.) When leaders are taken by death. Moses, about to die, anxious to expound and enforce the law, urges to obedience. 2. This displays God’s goodness to us. Deep concern, continual watchfulness and activity, repetition of instruction and grief at unbelief. “O that there was such a heart in them” (Ch. v. 29).

human life. *Temptations*, trials to teach dependence and strengthen faith. *Signs* which discover law and reveal God’s presence. *Miracles*, indicative of supernatural power to control events and impress the heart. But *insight* is required to receive and practice the lesson. Be “men who understand the times.”

Ver. 4. *A great danger.* Lest the great things of this life blind men to spiritual interests and spiritual peril. Thus become a bait by which they are caught and destroyed (Rom. xi. 8). “Unwillingness to see is punished by incapacity of seeing. The natural

Ver. 3. Divine methods of human training. Elements of education in



punishment to spiritual perversity is spiritual blindness." This explains the indifference of many who constantly hear and constantly reject the gospel—is a mark of God's anger and a foretaste of more terrible punishment. What God has inflicted God alone can remove. None can open the eyes of the blind but He who has closed them.

Ver. 5. *Clothes.* Not the worse for wearing, but grew as their bodies did, some think. They needed not to trouble themselves with those anxious thoughts of heathens, what they should eat, drink, or put on. Never was

prince served and supplied in such state as these Israelites were.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 6. From this verse we learn that during their desert journeys of forty years the Israelites abstained from *all* kinds of *yayin* and *shaker*, unfermented and fermented, innocent and inebriating. Hence those "do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures," who either deride abstinence as a novelty, or condemn it as an impracticable or dangerous habit of life.—*Temp. Com.*

### SUMMONS TO RENEWED CONSECRATION.—*Verses 10–15.*

Israel urged to enter into covenant again. This implies two contracting parties. Hence God is present, and they stand before Him in representative capacity.

**I. This consecration is urgent.** "This day." A day of solemn events and remembrances; of self-examination and pressing duties; of high hope and inspiring enterprise. Life has its bright and dark days. Its friendships, trials, and obligations. There should be no delay. This very hour is "big with life's futurities." Procrastination may ruin.

**II. This consecration is representative.** All were summoned to attend. Leaders, "captains of tribes," elders and officers, must set an example, and think it no dishonour to renew their covenant with God. Women and children must not be forgotten, but numbered with those present. Little ones are fit to be joined in covenant to the Lord. Strangers as well as sons of Israel; servants as well as free men; those absent and those present, posterity for generations to come—all concerned. This an indication of favour to Gentiles, a type of the covenant of grace. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

**III. This consecration will exalt and establish the nation.** "That he may establish thee to-day" ver. 13. 1. By *restoring* to God. "A people unto Himself" to fear, love and obey Him. "Be unto thee a God," according to his promise and purpose. This personal relationship is most needful, specially delightful to God, and constantly set forth in Deuteronomy. 2. By *creating a sense of obligation to God.* In covenant we pledge ourselves to remember God and cherish a sense of duty. We forget obligation, require deeper feeling and renewed devotion. Personal faith in God and national dependence upon Him are stronger than iron ships and granite walls. Without these we have no superiority, no permanency, no power to establish and preserve a church or a people. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 10. *Stand.* As subjects to swear allegiance—an assembly to worship—an army to fight. A solemn and noble position!

"They also serve who stand and wait."

*God examining man.* "This day"—a day of thankfulness, regrets, interesting recollections, uncertainty, anticipation. The position indicated implies:—I. That we depend upon God's bounty. II. That we are continually open to His inspection. III. That our future destiny is in His hands. Application—Let us this day stand before the Lord. 1. Humble penitents. 2. Sincere believers. 3. Faithful servants.—*Bib. Museum.*

Ver. 12. *Enter into covenant.* More than repeating it, coming near to it or mere profession of it. Entire, real entrance, sharing its benefits and going into its obligations. "The expression is very remarkable. It is one of those proofs of the exceeding greatness of the love and condescension of God, which are so often found in the Bible. He might command simply and tell the creature. The obligation of that command is on you, whether you like it or not. But he asks man freely to accept what eternally is his duty, to enter into covenant with him; that is, openly to accept his service, that he may bless us."—(*Cumming.*)

## DANGERS TO BE SHUNNED.—Verses 16–21.

Moses now warns against breaking the covenant into which they have entered; he describes the fearful results of apostasy.

**I. Idolatry with its abominations.** Their experience should have taught them how worthless, how helpless idols were in Egypt and on the march to Canaan. 1. *Abominations which were prevalent.* Egypt was addicted to such evils, and many were tainted through dwelling there. 2. *Abominations which were fascinating.* "Ye have seen abominations" in other nations; still hanker after them, and are almost drawn away. "Idols of wood and stone, silver and gold," are more attractive than the invisible God. If the lessons of experience were treasured up and utilised, we should avoid many dangers. "Experience is an excellent schoolmaster."—*Carlyle.*

**II. Apostasy with its evils.** "Lest there should be among you man or woman," &c. (ver. 18). 1. *Apostasy beginning with individuals.* The lump is what its particles are, the nation as its individuals. Personal influence and character affect the community. "The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it" (*J. S. Mill*). "One sinner destroyeth much good." 2. *Apostasy bitter in results.* "A root that beareth gall and wormwood"—a root deeply planted, firmly strengthened, and mischievously productive; quick in growth and stupifying in nature. Sin, like poison, destroys the life of a nation. The bread of idolatry, sweet in the mouth, becomes bitter in the experience: what is pleasant in the taste convulses the system with pain. Its riches will sicken, turn to moral poison, "and he shall vomit them up again" (Job xx. 14–16).

**III. Presumption with its risks.** "And it come to pass that he bless himself" (ver. 19). This supposes that one may think himself secure, even amidst danger; promise impunity though persisting in impiety; daring presumption, an affront to God and a certain ruin! 1. *The method of presumption.* (a) False promises. "I shall have peace," when there is no peace. (b) Intense blindness. He blesses himself, when the words of the curse are thundering in his ear.

(c) Abominable wickedness. Walking in the imagination of his own heart, when God urges obedience to his commands. Indulging in lust, "adding drunkenness to thirst" and sin to sin. 2. *The consequences of presumption.* "The Lord will not spare him" (ver. 20). He will be detected, arraigned, and convicted; escape is impossible. He will be—(a) Exposed to divine retribution, "the anger of the Lord," &c.; (b) Shut out from covenant blessings (ver. 21); (c) Unforgiven in offence; (d) Forgotten in existence. No perpetuation of name, no posterity to succeed him. "According to all the curses written in the book" (ver. 21). The covenant has *curses* as well as blessings: God is *just* as well as gracious. If we presume upon good when indulging in sin, we shall be awfully deceived. "He that presumes steps into the throne of God" (*Dr. South*). "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

#### THE IMPIOUS BOASTER.—Verse 19.

**I. Boasting in abominable wickedness.** Glorying in shame. 1. *Walking in a course of self-indulgence.* 2. *Enticing others by his example.* Asserting their security, and leading others to think as they do. "They say still unto them that despise Me the Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you." Jer. xxiii. 17.

**II. Boasting with resolute purpose.** "I walk in the firmness (hardness) of my heart"—sin hardens by its deceitfulness and continuance. The "conscience is seared" (branded as with a hot iron) by burning lusts, 1 Tim. iv. 2. The heart is obdurate and unmoved by warnings and curses. "Hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

**III. Boasting ending in utter ruin.** Men rejoice in iniquity. "All such rejoicing is evil," most fatal. There is no evasion, no escape. "The Lord will not spare him." "All the curses shall lie upon him."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16, 17. *Ye know, &c. The discipline of experience.* Precepts and instruction useful but practical wisdom only learnt in the school of experience. Israel were taught valuable lessons in Egypt and the wilderness. Have we learned courage and confidence in conflicts and victories? What have we gained in discipline of heart and mind? "Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law."

Ver. 18. *The heart turned.* 1. Apostasy in its origin "the heart." "An evil heart of unbelief." 2. Apostasy in its results—(a). Turning away from God. (b). Joining idols. God admits of no rival. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

*Wormwood.* Sin a bitter root, bear-

ing deadly fruit as in Achan, Jos. vii. 25, and in those who turned to idols and seduced others. The apostle alluding to this text says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God (fall short), lest any *root of bitterness* springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Heb. xii. 15.

Ver. 19. *Danger of carnal security.* I. The astonishing delusion of sinners. On every side we behold—1. Their fearlessness; 2. Their self-complacency. 3. Their confidence. II. Their awful doom. 1. Infalibly certain. 2. Inexpressibly severe. Learn (1.) To compassionate the ungodly world. (2.) To be on our guard against being influenced by its advice. (3.) To be thankful if God has made us to differ from it.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*



WARNINGS TO POSTERITY.—*Verses 22–28.*

When punishment comes upon them for wickedness, all thoughtful people around them will be convinced of the righteous judgments of God in the fulfilment of His word.

**I. Posterity influenced by present conduct.** The nation is organic—one whole community. In the covenant, those present represented those absent. So future generations share in our privileges, reap the consequences of our decisions and sins. 1. *The land may be affected.* Canaan was afflicted with “plagues and sicknesses,” consumed with fire, and overthrown like Sodom. The garden of the Lord was turned into desolation and waste. The sterility of Palestine is the stranger’s wonder (Volney’s “*Ruins*”), and a historic witness and warning to nations. “He turneth . . . a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein” (Ps. cvii. 33, 34). 2. *The people may be affected.* “Rooted out and cast into other lands” (ver. 28). Our children will be better or worse, upset or confirmed in virtue, by our moral conduct. Physical features are characteristic of races: so moral features are stamped upon descendants. Calculate upon remote results. “Generations to come” may be astonished, afflicted, and cursed by our actions. “The evil that men do,” as well as the good, “lives after them.” “Thou recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them.”

**II. Posterity so concerned will enquire into the reasons.** The condition of the nation the reverse of what it had been—read in the light of history and prophecy the change astonishing. Hence the question, “Wherefore?” (ver. 24). God has reasons for retribution. These reasons may be known from His word, when known they should check our wickedness. Learn: 1. *The natural connection between suffering and sin.* They forsook God and served idols (ver. 25), sins are reproduced in posterity, bound by an indissoluble chain of causation to the future. To-day’s actions are the result of yesterday’s, and the cause of future conditions. 2. *The visible proof of this connection in providential history.* Divine retribution manifest the sins of nations and the judgment of God upon them. The sterility of Palestine explains the broken covenant. Its barren hills and mute appeal—its awful silence and impressive scenes, utter the curse of God and turn spectators into enquiring penitents. “The curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him” (Dan. ix. 11, 13, 14; cf. 1 Kings ix. 8, 9; Jer. xxii. 8, 9).

NATIONAL DEFECTION AND GRIEVOUS RETRIBUTION.—*Verses 22–28.*

**I. National defection.** “They have forsaken the covenant,” etc. (ver. 25). 1. *Springing from individual sin* (ver. 18). Nations live, act, and decay through individuals. Do not overlook the parts in the whole, the one in the millions. “Individuality is the root of everything, good or evil.” 2. *Manifest in universal apostacy.* “They went and served other gods” (ver. 26). The grand object of Israel was forgotten, and its privileges were bartered away. “Gods whom they knew not,” and to whom they were under no obligation, were served instead of the true God—the God of their fathers to whom they owed everything they possessed. “Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory (Jehovah the glory of Israel, Ps. cvi. 20; Rom. i. 23) for that which doth not profit (idols, ver. 8) Jer. ii. 11.

**II. Greivous retribution.** Nations rise to power and influence, fall into sin and suffer decay. Rome, after the prevalence of luxury, pride and cruelty. Spain, after persecution of truth and exclusion of the Bible. Egypt, once a powerful empire, ultimately "the basest of kingdoms" for its idolatry. 1. *Retribution extensive.* In the whole land. 2. *Retribution terrible.* Anger of God kindled, the people uprooted, cast out and suffered great indignation. 3. *Retribution complete.* Land neither sown nor fruitful, stricken and accursed. The people idolatrous, homeless and rejected. The Jews forsook Jehovah, defied His providential arrangements and brought eternal blight upon a land "flowing with milk and honey."

"Such acts  
Of contumacy will provoke the Highest  
To make death in us live."—*Milton*.

#### DIVINE SECRETS.—*Deut.* xxix. 29.

This passage suggests

**I.** That there are in the universe certain domains accessible to none but God. This passage holds true. First—*In reference to material creation.* There are secrets which Nature has not whispered in the ear of her most ardent lovers. Second—*In reference to the decrees of Providence.* Cross-providences, etc. "Clouds and darkness are round about him." Social inequalities, etc. Third—*In reference to the mysteries of redemption.* "Great is the mystery, etc." "The angels desire to look into these things."

**II.** That impenetrable secrecy is compatable with paternal benevolence. All nature proves this. Family mercies prove this. Never make God's secrets a plea for neglecting His bounties.

**III.** That divine secrecy is no argument for human disobedience. "Those things which are revealed belong unto us." Here we have three ideas. First—*An acknowledgment of a Divine revelation.* Second—*The confession of our relationship to God.* He has given us laws, etc. Third—*An implication of our power to obey the Divine requirements.* The "revealed" things "belong unto us, for obedience," etc.

**IV.** That inquisitiveness into secret things is a fruitful cause of scepticism. Man will pry into the forbidden. One kind of inquisitiveness (Eve's) has inflicted fatal misery on millions! Let us leave God to deal with His own decrees, to manage the boundless realm of causes, and to work out His inconceivable purposes. It is right that there should be subjects above our comprehension, could we comprehend all, we should be gods and not men.

Brethren! Seek not to penetrate the secret recesses of God's tabernacle. "Who can by searching, find out God?" He has permitted us to enter the antechamber. Let us learn to reverence, to labour, and to wait. In due time the King will admit us further. We shall be taken to higher altitudes, and

"There we shall see His face.  
And never, never sin."

*Dr. J. Parker.*

#### SECRET THINGS.—*Verse* 29.

This seems to be an answer to a question which the people might naturally put after some threatenings. After all miracles, mercies, and corrections, shall we be so wicked as to provoke God to destroy us? Will our posterity become

so profligate as to bring upon themselves such unexampled calamities? Moses replies, "The secret, therefore." Such events are hidden in future. You know enough to avoid punishment and secure favour. Render present obedience and busy not yourselves about things beyond your knowledge.

**I. That there are things revealed which we know and ought to practice.** "The things which are revealed belong to us." 1. *Truths to be received.* Truths concerning God, man, Jesus Christ—doctrines to create wonder and admiration, to excite joy and stimulate study. 2. *Duties to be performed.* Duties to God, ourselves and our neighbours—duties which make life easy and happy, which solve doubt and please God when performed. If this will not satisfy, curiosity would disquiet, if we had the powers and capacities of angels.

**II. That there are things which cannot be discovered and should not engage our attention.** "Secret things." Mysteries of nature, events of providence, and circumstances of social and individual life which puzzle the wisest. We are finite in capacity and only know in part. The unknown is a universe of endless wonders, the revelations of which are in the wise keeping of God. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me." The first lesson Pythagoras taught was silence. We must restrain curiosity and check pride. Act our part and not speculate. For "he giveth not account of any of his matters." "How unsearchable are his judgments (decisions), and his ways (modes of executing), past finding out (undiscoverable) Rom. xi. 33.

**III. That our welfare is secured only by practising things which are revealed.** "That ye may do." Revelation is given, not to indulge curiosity, but to provide a remedy for our blindness and misery. Light enough to make faith rational, duty plain, and unbelief without excuse. "Were the curtain lifted further from holy mysteries, man would be lost in hopeless bewilderment" (*Hare*). "Things revealed" should be the precious portion "for us and for our children." To believe and obey here will be our preparation and safety for that world in which we shall know as also we are known."

Thy God hath said 'tis good for thee  
To walk by faith and not by sight.  
Take it on trust a little while,  
Soon shalt thou read the mystery right,  
In the bright sunshine of His smile.—*Keble*.

#### THE ADVANTAGES OF SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE.

Consider—I. That there is a limit with respect to our knowledge of God and of Divine things. There is much mystery with regard—1. Doctrines. 2. Promises; 3. Divine Dispensations. II. That within the boundary of that limit there is much with which we can and ought to be acquainted; "the things which are revealed, etc."—Consider—1. Where the revelation of these things is to be formed; 2. Of which it consists; 3. For whose advantage it was given. III. That the experimental knowledge of that which is attainable will be accompanied with practical results.—*E. Tottenham, M.A.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 22-28. 1. The cursed land. 2. The disinherited people. 3. The stranger's wonder. 4. The solemn warning. "Thus the law of Moses leaves sinners under the curse, and rooted out of the Lord's land; but

the grace of Christ towards penitent believing sinners plants them again upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up, being kept by the power of God (Amos. 9, 15).—*Ainsworth*.



Ver. 26. *God the portion of His people.* "Whom he had, &c," Heb., signifies portion, lot, and may be rendered, "There was no portion to them : that is, the gods they served could neither supply their wants nor save their souls ; they were no portion" (*A. Clarke*). A contrast to Jehovah.

Ver. 28. *Cast them with a violence, with a vengeance ;—in the Hebrew word cast hath an extraordinary great letter :—sling them out as out of a sling* (1 Sam. 25, 29).—*Trapp*.

Ver. 29. Learn 1. God's ways are not comprehended by His short-sighted creatures. 2. God is not bound to explain His ways to any of His creatures. 3. God gives means to instruct His creatures in things needful. Therefore cease to strive and cavil ; learn

to submit, trust solely. *Secret things.* God hath three sorts of secrets ; first, the secret of His counsel and decrees ; secondly, the secrets of His providence and outward administrations ; thirdly, the secrets of his spirit and grace. From the two former God hath locked out the holiest of men as the apostles challenge, Rom. xi. 34, and David intimates, Ps. iii. 2 (*Caryl*). The writer of *Reminiscences of Robert Hall* says I requested him to print a sermon from Deut. 29, 29. "Why, Sir, I did not reserve any notes of it ; I almost forgot it. Do you remember how I treated it, Sir ?" "Yes, Sir, I think I recollect. *First*, you noticed the decrees of the Divine Being ; secondly, the mysteries of Christian truth ; thirdly, the concerns of human life." "Aye, I remember it now, Sir ; I believe you are right."

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 4. *Ears to hear.* As it is difficult to strike the right tone and key to make a deaf person hear, it was difficult to find such forms of thought and expression as would make their way into the ear of their mind.

Ver. 5. *Clothes.* Clothes are for necessity ; warm clothes, for health ; cleanly, for decency ; lasting, for thrift ; and rich, for magnificence.—*Dr. Fuller*.

Ver. 6. *Know.* He shall never want mercy who does not wanton mercy.—*W. Seeker*. To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them.—*Idem*.

Poor soul ! God's goodness hath been great to thee ;  
Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass,  
But still remember what the Lord hath done.  
—2 King Henry VI.

Vers. 10-15. *Covenant.* Consecration makes not a place sacred, but only solemnly declares it so.—*Dr. South*. Consecration is going out into the world where God Almighty is, and using every power for His glory. It is taking all advantages as trust finds

—as confidential debts owed to God. It is simply dedicating one's life, in its whole flow, to God's service.—*H. W. Beecher*.

Ver. 18. *Wormwood.* And certainly the more a man drinketh of the world the more it intoxicateth.—*Bacon*. *Our God.* No religious things can satisfy a living religious soul. Life craves life for its satisfaction ; the living soul cries out for the living God.—*Dr. Allon*.

Ver. 19.—*Drunkenness to thirst.* Thirst teaches all animals to drink, but drunkenness belongs only to man.—*Pielding*.

Pleasure is good, and man for pleasure made ;  
But pleasure full of glory as of joy,  
Pleasure which neither blushes nor expires.  
—*Dr. E. Young*.

Ver. 21. *Curses.* The noblest reward of nature is nature itself ; and the extremest punishment of vice is vice itself.—*Ld. Bacon*.

Know then this truth, enough for man to know,  
Virtue alone is happiness below.  
—*Pope*.

Vers. 23-27. *The land.* See Thomson Ld. and Bk. Volney's "Ruins of Empires," Bk. 2.

Ver. 29. *Secret things.* A cockle-fish might as well attempt to bring the ocean into its little shell as a man attempt to understand the ways

of God.—*Bp. Beveridge.* In His purposes and His dispensations He is equally and perfectly independent, infinitely exalted above the supervision or direction of His creatures.—*Hodge.*

And he who waits to have his task marked out Shall die, and leave his errand unfulfilled.

—*Lowell.*

## CHAPTER XXX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Israel were rejected and exiled on account of apostacy, but not absolutely cast off for ever. If they would return to the Lord he would turn his favour towards them again, and gather them out of dispersion.

1-3. *Mind*, bethink themselves, not mere recollection, but consideration of their conduct and condition. *Return* (ver. 2) from idolatry to the service of Jehovah; in penitence and obedience. *Thy captivity*, ver. 3. Not to bring back the captives, but to end distress and have mercy upon them, Job xlii. 10; Ps. lxxxv. 2; Jer. xxix. 14.

4-8. Consequent upon deliverance would be the gathering of Israel from all parts into their land in greater numbers. This, partly fulfilled in Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, refers, according to some, to future restoration of Jews to Palestine. "But application is found in the spirit, not in the letter. The multiplication promised consists in realising the promise to Abraham that his seed should grow into nations (Gen. xvii. 6), *i.e.*, not "Israel according to the flesh," but "Israel according to the spirit," whose land is not restricted to the earthly Canaan or Palestine" (*Keil*). Ver. 7, after conversion the curses resting upon them would fall upon their enemies, Gen. xii. 3. They would again return and obey, and rejoice in full privileges and covenant blessings.

11-14. *Hidden* literally not too wonderful, not too difficult to understand or practice *cf.* ch. xvii. 8; not too distant, in *Heaven* inaccessible; nor beyond the *sea* (Mediterranean) too far away. *Go for us.* Who able to fetch it? No excuse of ignorance or inability to plead. *Nigh*, ver. 14, in the written and authorised word; subject of common conversation and daily examination.

15-20. Moses sums up the whole in the words of ver. 15, as in ch. xi. 26, 27. *Good prosperity* and salvation; *evil* adversity and distraction (*Keil*) urges them to love the Lord, walk in his ways, and not permit themselves to be torn away into idolatry. *For he, i.e.*, that is thy life, the condition of thy life and its prolongation in the land, *viz.*, "to love the Lord," *cf.* Ps. xxvii. 1: John xi. 25; xvii. 3; 1 John, v. 20.

### PENITENT RETURN TO GOD.—*Verses 1-7.*

The threatenings of the preceding chapter would not utterly destroy Israel. The mercy of God is in store for them, rejoices against judgment and gives room for repentance. These words may be taken as a prediction or a promise. As a promise they belong to Israel and to all who repent and turn to God. Repentance is described, which is the condition of promise as:

I. *Return springing from remembrance of sins.* "Call to mind." Misery leads to reflection and reflection ends in self-reproach. When dreams of ambition are dissipated and conscience accuses, then the mind turns inward, preys upon itself and regret for the past ensues (Judas). "I am no longer the Great Napoleon," said the exile of St. Helena. The mind, the disposition, is changed, which leads to change of relation to God, "repentance toward God" and to amendment of life—David and the prodigal. "Remember this and shew yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors!"

**II. Return most sincere, "With all thine heart."** (*ver 2*) No return without change of heart. Lot's wife moved slowly forward and left her heart behind. Orpah stopped short at the moment of decision. Thus many go halfway, divide the heart with the world and God. The heart must be given and made contrite. "The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite spirit" were written over the bed of Augustine to remind him of sincerity in life. "Rend your heart and turn unto the Lord."

**III. Return graciously encouraged.** Many blessings are mentioned to induce return. 1. They will become objects of special pity. "The Lord will have compassion, &c." (*verse 3*). 2. They will be gathered from other nations and fixed in their own land. Penitents are not only delivered from misery but restored to happiness and divine inheritance. 3. They will be increased in number (*verse 5*). Multiplication would give security and superiority. Through children joy and prosperity. 4. They will be weaned from idolatry (*verse 6*). Circumcised in heart—an inward change which sets forth sanctification and obedience of life. 5. They will be relieved from curse—curses transferred to their enemies (*verse 7*). When God undertakes for his people, opposition is vain. Omnipotence will reverse our condition, restore from ruin, and pour out blessings most abundant and complete.

#### CIRCUMCISION OF HEART—*Verse 6.*

Consider—I. The blessing to be bestowed—circumcision of heart. 1. The truths which circumcision taught, and the blessings of which it was the pledge, are the birthright of every real child of God; 2. All these blessings are communicated to every genuine member of the Christian Church through Christ. A circumcised Saviour affords a pledge of—(1) A perfect obedience on behalf of His people; (2). The putting away of the guilt of sin; (3). The personal and internal circumcision which distinguishes all the real children of God. 3. God, as sovereign, retains to Himself the application of these blessings. 4. Their extension to the seed of those who partake of this spiritual circumcision is a further illustration of God's sovereignty and benignity towards His people. II. Its immediate result: love to God. 1. The source of this love: God Himself. 2. The ground on which he lays claim to it—(1). His absolute excellencies; (2). His particular relations. 3. Its extent and intensity. We must love God with all our heart. III. Its ultimate issue: everlasting life. A life of—1. Enjoyment; 2. Activity; 3. Growth; 4. Permanency. Learn—1. The due distinction between the symbolical and spiritual; 2. The blessed character of true religion.—*J. Hill, M.A.*

I do not shame

"To tell you what I was, since my conversion  
So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am."—*Shakspeare.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *Important steps*; consideration—return to obedience. *Description of true penitence.* 1. Return to God, in sorrow, humiliation and confidence. 2. As our God to whom we owe personal allegiance and whom we are resolved to obey universally and heartily in future. "Behold we come unto Thee; for thou art the Lord our God." (*Jer. iii. 22.*)

Ver. 1, 7. Learn—1. Repentance is needful to be restored to God's favour. 2. Repentance prevails with God to show mercy. 3. Repentance is open to the most distant and degraded sinner. 4. Repentance is the gift of God. He works in the mind, seeks out the lost, and exalted Jesus to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel (*Acts v. 31*). "Repent ye



therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Ver. 2, 3. *Return, &c.* I. *Attitude indicated.* Inattention to God's character, word and claims. The *back* is upon God and not the face (Jer. ii. 27). 2. Criminal negligence. Like a servant who disobeys orders, pays no regard to your command and keeps his back turned upon you (Jer. xxxii. 33.) 3. Obstinate disobedience. Men always active and represented in scripture as *walking* in some way. Wicked walk "in the way of their heart, contrary to God." II. *Reasons for changing this*

*attitude.* "Shalt return, &c." 1. God worthy—in himself: "the Lord" self-existent, the centre and source of excellence. In his relation to us "the Lord thy God," to dignify and enrich. "My soul," said John Brown, of Haddington, "hath found inexpressibly more sweetness and satisfaction in a single line of the Bible, nay in two such words as these '*thy God*' and '*my God*' than all the pleasures found in the things of the world since the creation could equal." 2. God warrants return. He will have "compassion upon thee." 3. Scripture encourages return (Isa. lv. 7.)

#### SIGNS OF TRUE REPENTANCE.—Verses 8-10.

I. True Repentance is accompanied with salutary fear. "If thou shalt hearken," etc. The penitent does not trifle, but trembles at the word. He is afraid to offend. When God speaks, he listens to learn and obey.

II. True repentance leads to reformation of conduct. "Thou shalt return" (ver. 8). No murmuring, hatred, and departure from God, but right views, feelings, and relation to God. *Re-tracing* one's steps, turning again. "I will arise and go to my Father."

III. True repentance is evidenced by sincere obedience to God's will. "Turn with all thine heart and keep his commandments" v. 10). Self-will destroyed, God's authority acknowledged, and His will supreme. The *heart* rightly affected, the *life* rightly directed, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

IV. True repentance meets with divine acceptance. "The Lord thy God will make thee plenteous rejoice over thee for good" (ver. 9). Sins forgiven, deliverance from enemies, restoration to lost blessings, and divine favours enjoyed. Men unfit to be forgiven, without sorrow for sin, incapable of mercy, if insensible to wrong doing, and resolved not to amend. We are only prepared for blessings ourselves and useful to others by deep personal repentance. Paul, Luther, Bunyan instances. Then are we "plenteous, prosperous in every work of our hand."

#### THE KNOWLEDGE OF DUTY SIMPLE AND EASY.—Verses 11-13.

The people are encouraged and reminded by necessary instruction placed in their reach. God had revealed His will, and made the performance of it easy. Ignorance is inexcusable, and disobedience unreasonable.

I. It is not hidden in obscurity and mystery. Heathen oracles shrouded in mystery; signs and wonders given in the grove of Dodona; the cave of Trophonius; the temple of Delphi; and the oasis of Ammon. But the commands of God are simple and duty clear. "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth" (Is. xlv. 19).

II. It is accessible. "The word is very nigh unto thee" (ver. 14). 1. Not in heaven above. Shut up, beyond reach, but delivered and published in our

hearing. 2. Not *too distant* from us. "Beyond the sea"—to be fetched like heathen wisdom from far off lands. 3. It is *nigh*. In our moral constitution, the word of God and the sound of the gospel. No long course of ceremonies and round of duties to obtain peace. "Confess with the mouth and believe with thine heart."

III. It is practicable. "That thou mayest do it." The word is clear, and available to be obeyed. Its obligations are not impracticable, beyond our power to fulfil. To *know* will not avail; we must loyally *do* the command. Creeds may be orthodox and accurate; but the law and the gospel must be put into the *heart* and the life.

#### GREAT PRINCIPLES, OR LAW APPLIED BY GOSPEL.

The passage is not cited by St. Paul merely in the way of illustration, much less as accommodated to suit the purposes of the argument on hand, regardless of its significance in its own context. We have in Romans an authoritative interpretation of what the words of Moses do really and principally, if not obviously signify. The prophet spake, the apostle expounded, by one and the selfsame spirit. Those who believe this will not question its authority, and consequently not the correctness of the sense assigned by the latter to the words of the former.—*Speak. Com.*

I. God has clearly made known His will to man. "This commandment." A law of Divine authority. Not to be mutilated, adjusted and treated at pleasure. Neither self-contradictory nor impossible to understand. But essential, plain and reasonable in requirement.

II. It is therefore needless for man to search for what is made known. Such a revelation puts an end to all efforts for that which is revealed. We need not climb the sky, nor cross the sea. 1. This would imply *ignorance*, which is not excusable, for the word is nigh, spoken by human lips, and clear as day. 2. This would imply *obstinacy*. A rejection of God's revelation, as much as if Moses or Israel had tried to obtain by human wisdom what God had made known.

III. It is man's best interest to believe and obey God's will. We can never guide and justify ourselves. Christ puts an end to self-righteousness and brings a righteousness through faith. 1. *This allays our anxiety*. "Say not" in doubt, perplexity and unbelief, "who shall go up," etc. Why search for a thing that is near? 2. *This satisfies our moral need*. It sufficeth intellect and heart—accords with our mental constitution and moral condition. 3. *It is the only method of salvation*. The word is required by all, within the reach of all, and must be appropriated by all. Its rejection is not due to physical or mental incapacity but to want of will, lack of faith. "Confess with thy mouth, believe in thine heart and thou shalt be saved."

IV. That man may believe and obey—the gospel brings him help. Righteousness by works precluded. Human obedience could not reach the required standard. Faith not works the method of God's righteousness. Law says *do this* and thou shalt live; gospel, "*believe* and thou shalt be saved." Paul interprets the law, as Israel, as all men will look upon it when "circumcised in heart." Christ is the only, the all-sufficient hope for the sinner. He delivers from despair and a broken law—brings peace to the heavy laden and confers that "righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe."

O how unlike the complex works of man,  
Heaven's easy, artless, uncumber'd plan!  
Inscribed above the portal from afar,  
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,  
Legible only by the light they give,  
Stand the soul-quick'ning words—*Believe and live!*—Cowper. Truth 21-31.

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 11-14. *The Bible in itself.* The text shows. 1. The closeness with which the word of God addresses the soul, and the paternal familiarity of its style: "the word is very nigh unto thee." II. That His word is to be avowedly our counsellor, "in thy mouth." III. That it is to be embraced by our affections, and dwell in them; "in thy heart." IV. That obedience to it is the necessary proof of a believing reception of it; "that thou mayest do it."—*Biblical Museum.*

Ver. 12. *Say.* The anxious follower after righteousness is not disappointed by an impracticable code, nor mocked by an unintelligible revelation: the word is *near him*, therefore *accessible*; *plain* and simple

and therefore *apprehensible*; and we may fairly add, deals with *definite historical fact*, and therefore *certain* (*Alford* on Rom. x., 6.). The law of Christ is substantially the same as that of Moses, only (1) exhibited more clearly in its spiritual nature and extensive application and (2) accompanied with the advantages of gospel grace, is practicable and easy.—(*Jamieson*).

Ver. 14. In the *heart* for our personal salvation in the *mouth* for God's glory and the salvation of others. In the heart and not in the mouth is cowardice; in the mouth and not in the heart is hypocrisy. The gospel *believed* is a fountain in the heart; the gospel *confessed* is the streams through the mouth.—*Robinson.*

## THE ALTERNATIVE CHOICE.—Verses 15-20.

Moses is extremely anxious for the welfare of his people. But he cannot force them to do right. He urges, persuades, and entreats; makes a final effort to win them over. "See, I have set before thee, etc."

I. Obedience to God's command leads to life. "That thou mayest live" (ver. 16). Under law and gospel this is the immutable order. 1. *It pleases God the source of life.* Without Him life is a shadow, a blank. "In Him we live." 2. *It secures outward blessings to sustain life.* "Thy God shall bless thee in the land." "Godliness hath promise of the life that now is." "He is thy life, and the length of thy days" (ver. 20). 3. *It gains divine favour,* which is life, and His loving kindness, which is better than life (lives). Lives which are longest and happiest—all lives put together (Ps. lxxiii. 3).

II. Disobedience leads to death. "As righteousness tendeth to life," is full of real enjoyment, of infinite and eternal pleasure, "so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death" (Prov. xi. 19). 1. *Death most dreadful.* The curse of God (ver. 19). Sin, a constant warfare with God, can never succeed; hopes wither away and the curse ruins. 2. *Death most certain.* "Ye shall surely perish" (ver. 18). It cannot be avoided; is the only possible result of disobedience. As sure as the shadow follows the substance, or the avenger of blood pursued the manslayer, so sure will sinners find *evil* and *death* at last. 3. *Death of which warning has been given.* "See, behold, I have set before you" (ver. 15). Warning with deepest anxiety and most passionate appeal. No excuse, you know; you see—"Forewarned, forearmed." Flee impending evil and hide in Christ. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself, etc."

III. Hence the urgent request for right choice. "Therefore choose life" (ver. 19). 1. *You are free to choose.* God interferes not, nor trifles with the power of free choice. We are alone before God, individually responsible, and must decide for ourselves the question on which eternal life or death depends.



2. *You are urged to choose.* Our Maker and Preserver commends his love, claims our loyalty, and commands us to choose. "Choose life." 3. There should be no delay. "This day." The appeal from supreme authority to the noblest part of our nature and for our highest interests. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

I. Great moral truths are put before men. "Good and evil, life and death, blessing and cursing." Not simply to decide for business and profession, but to adjust claims of heaven and earth. Grand opportunity. Lost spirits not the chance!

II. Men's destiny will be decided according to their attitude towards these truths. Future results follow from present action. In worldly matters fortune made or marred, positions gained or lost by earnest decision. Paley at college shakes off habitual negligence, rises at four o'clock to study and write immortal books. "I will be a hero," was the turning point in Nelson's destiny. A decided "No" to evil, a firm purpose gives strength and security (Joseph and Daniel). Eternity—life or death, heaven or hell hang on your decision.

III. A solemn appeal is made for right decision. Right and good are revealed, commended and offered. They cannot be ignored or destroyed. A choice *must* be made. Direction and help offered. Ponder well. Ruin inevitably follows sin and indecision. "Therefore choose life" (ver. 19).

Our doubts are traitors ;  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt it.—*Shakespeare.*

#### TWO PATHWAYS OF LIFE.—*Verses 16, 17–20.*

God is the centre and sum of happiness—the author of our being, and should be the object of pursuit. Some cleave to God and others forsake him. Hence two pathways set forth.

1. Some are forsaking God, ver. 17. The soul made for fellowship with God, apart from Him is a world without sun. Yet what forgetfulness, departure and practical atheism in life! 1. *Through alienated affection.* "If thine heart turn away." We have affections as well as intellect. These influence our judgment and discernment of truth. God seeks to instruct the heart, not the head, to captivate and improve the affections. "An evil heart of unbelief" leads to apostasy from God, Heb. iii. 12.

2. *Manifest in wilful deafness.* "Thou wilt not hear." The voice loud as thunder, but the will fixed and stubborn, conscience resisted and warning refused. "They are like the deaf adder which stoppeth her ear."

3. *Indicative of weak attachment.* "Drawn away" by counter attractions. If the heart not rightly fixed, attention is misdirected, then instability, feebleness and falling away. "Turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart."

4. *Resulting in degraded idolatry.* "Worship other gods and serve them."—God out of our thoughts (Rom. i. 28) and dethroned from heart and life, the creature will be set up. The conserving principle is destroyed; degradation, gross idolatry, and pollution ensue.

"God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other Gods."

When to our own devices left, we frame  
A shameful creed of craft and cruelty.

—*London.*

**II Others are loyal in obedience to God.** "Love the Lord thy God—obey His voice—cleave to Him" (ver. 20). 1. *Love, the spring of obedience.* This its essential principle. Authority cannot kindle love, and service without love is slavery and disloyalty. 2. *Love, the rule of daily life.* "To walk in His ways." Love is the dominant power in all activity and enterprise. Obedience is not for a season, but constant and universal. "Blessed is he who doeth righteousness at all times." 3. *Love, resulting in God's favour.* "Thy God shall bless thee." Bless thee with preservation from danger; "the Lord preserveth all them that love Him"—with peace, "great peace have they which love thy law"—with perpetuation of life and attendant blessings, "bless thee in the land and prolong thy days." God's favour converts power and external possessions into blessings. Without this, fairest prospects and largest estates lose their charm—without this, no certainty of any possession and not a day's lease of life. "*He is thy life and the length of thy days.*"

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16. *His ways* 1. *The path-way.* Safe, pleasant, and attractive. 2. *How to enter it.* Love and obedience. "Love the Lord" and "keep His commandments." 3. *The benefits of walking in it.* "Live, multiply and blessed in the land." "Show me thy ways O Lord, teach me thy paths."

Vers. 15-19. *Life and death set before the young.* I. In what sense life and death may be justly set before you. 1. You are faithfully informed that the course you adopt and pursue through life will terminate at last in an immense and tremendous extreme, as distant from the opposite as life is from death. 2. The nature of the two ways is closely pointed out to you. II. The manner in which they are proposed to your choice. There are some things—1. To alarm; promote self-jealousy and fear; the intrinsic depravity of your hearts; the fact that so much evil appears under semblance of good; prejudiced views of real religion. 2. To encourage: you never can be at a loss in deciding what is best. 3. To direct and admonish: beware of early levity, of bad habits, of ensnaring connections, of trifling with religion. III. Some considerations to enforce the importance of your choice. (1.) Privileges from earliest days. (2.) Special personal considerations. (3.) Influence of posterity.—*Bib. Museum.*

Ver. 19. *Two witnesses.* Heaven and earth. Moved, "called to record

in solemn manner." *cf.* 4, 26; 31, 28. 1. Because they indicate the presence of God. Heaven the throne and earth the footstool of God. 2. Because they help remembrance of events. Localities identified by the mind, spectators of scenes testify to the faithfulness of God and the sin of man. 3. Because influenced by the conduct of man. In his creation and fall they have felt the results and long for his redemption (Rom. viii. 19-23). *Choose life.* Divine advice. 1. The problems of life too difficult for us to solve. 2. God offers to be our guide; gives help and direction. 3. It is our duty to obey. When He speaks we should listen, obey and reverence His word. 4. It is madness to reject divine instruction, "Ye shall surely perish."

Ver. 20. *Three steps.* Love—obey—cleave, "Without close attachment and perseverance, temporary love, however sincere and fervent, temporary obedience, however disinterested, energetic and pure, while it lasts, will be ultimately ineffectual. He alone who endures to the end shall be saved."—*A. Clarke.* *Cleave.* Notice. 1. God the object of life. 2. The strength of attachment. 3. The constancy of pursuit. "My soul followeth hard after (*cleaveth unto*) Thee" (Ps. lxxiii. 8).

Grace leads the right way; if you choose the wrong,

Take it and perish, but restrain your tongue;  
Charge not, with light sufficient and left free,  
Your wilful suicide on God's decree.

—*Cowper.*

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAP. XXX.

Ver. 2. *Return*. When wrong has been done among men, the only way to obtain again the favour of those who have been injured, is by repentance. No man who has done evil in any way can be restored to forfeited favour, but by just this process of repentance—by a process involving all the elements of shame, grief, remorse, reformation, confession that are demanded in religion.—*Barnes*.

Ver. 11. *Not hidden*. "We ought not to attempt to draw down, or submit the mysteries of God to our reason; but, on the contrary, to raise and advance our reason to Divine truth.—*Bacon*.

Ver. 14. *Do it*. "Sir," said the Duke of Wellington to an officer of engineers, who urged the impossibility of executing the directions he had received, "I did not ask your opinion, I gave you my orders, and I expect them to be obeyed." Such should be the obedience of every follower of Jesus, the words which he has spoken are our law, not our judgment or

fancies. Even if death were in the way it is—

Not ours to reason why—  
Ours, but to dare and die.

and, at our master's bidding, advance through flood or flame.—*Spurgeon*.

Vers. 15-19. *This day*. It is recorded of Archius, a Grecian magistrate, that a conspiracy was formed against his life. A friend, who knew the plot, despatched a courier with the intelligence, who, on being admitted to the presence of the magistrate, delivered to him a packet with this message, "My Lord, the person who writes you this letter conjures you to read it immediately—it contains serious matters." Archius, who was then at a feast, replied, smiling, "Serious affairs to-morrow," put the packet aside and continued the revel. On that night the plot was executed, the magistrate slain, and Archius, on the morrow, when he intended to read the letter, a mutilated corpse, leaving to the world a fearful example of the effects of procrastination.—*J. A. James*.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

CRITICAL REMARKS.—Moses had finished the interpretation and enforcement of the law. But his work is not quite accomplished, he therefore makes final arrangements.

1-6. *Encouragement to Israel*. Went *Hcb*, continued to speak and prepare himself. His age not likely to render him a sufficient guide in future, though his natural force was unabated (*cf.* xxxiv. 7.) God also had intimated his approaching death and forbidden him to go over Jordan (*Num.* xx. 24). But God will go with them and Joshua will lead them, Hence "Be strong, he will not fail thee." (*cf.* Josh. i. 5, Heb. xiii. 5.)

7-8. *Joshua becomes leader*. Encouraged in the same words as the people. In the sight of all that his authority might not be questioned. *Fear not*. Many dangers and great reasons for fear—looking only to themselves.

9-13. *Moses commits the Law to Levites*. To be read at the end of seven years—the year of release (*ver.* 15). 1. *Taber* (*Lev.* xxiii. 24). *Appear* (*ver.* 11; *cf.* xvi. 16; *Neh.* viii. 12 *seq.*) *Read*, Josh. viii. 34; 2 Kings xxiii. *Law*—not the whole Pentateuch, but summaries.

14-18. *Moses informed of his Death*. Called with Joshua into the tabernacle (*v.* 15) he would sleep (lie down) with his fathers, but the nation would apostatise go a whoring. (*cf.* Ex. xxxiv. 15; *Judg.* ii. 17.) Break the covenant and God in anger would hide his face and suffer them to fall into deep troubles.

19-23. *Moses commanded to write a song as "a witness for God against them."* *Waxen fat* (*cf.* xxxii. 15; *Neh.* ix. 23; *Hos.* xiii. 6. *Forgotten* (*ver.* 21). "Being in verse it would be more easily learned and kept in memory. The use of songs for such didactic purposes not unknown to legislators of antiquity, and was familiar to theologians of later times of Social History (*Ecc.* vi. 8 and *Col.* iii. 16)"—*Speak. Com.*



24-27. The song finished and put into the ark of covenant. The book commenced before Ex. xvii. 14, gradually increased and now *finished*, i.e., in full, wholly complete. In the side. (ver. 26) for greater security and reverence. Only tables of stone in the ark (1 Kings viii, 9). Ver. 27. Words by which Moses handed the book to the priests.

28-30. Rehearsal to assembled elders. Gather civil authorities of the congregation specially to hear the ode. Know partly for past experience and partly for gift of prophecy. He pronounced the words audibly to the representative and they to the people of the song following.

#### A FAREWELL ADDRESS.—Verses 1-6.

Moses had spent 40 years in Pharaoh's court, 40 years in Midian, and 40 as leader of Israel. He is about to leave his people, but gives specific instructions and makes certain arrangements, from which learn—

**I. God's workmen are often taken away in the midst of usefulness.** The work of Moses not finished but he had intimation of death. 1. *Through old age*. "I am an hundred and twenty, &c." Old comparatively for "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." Age brings infirmities, and incapacitates for work. "It is the worst time we can choose to mend either our lives or our fortunes," says one. Not the time to begin the service of God, who deserves our energy from our youth, cf. 2 Sam. xix. 35 : Ecc. xii. 1-7. 2. *Through special Providence*. Sometimes punishment for sin. Moses and Aaron forbidden to enter Canaan, Num. xx. 12. David could not build the temple. Or accidents and sudden death cut off men when prominent, in the prime of life and the splendour of fame, and likely to be useful. Men who leave a blank not easily filled up, a heavy loss to the Christian Church and the world. Let each fulfil the end of life and be able to say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

**II. God's work is carried on by successors.** Moses dies, and Joshua succeeds. "God buries his workmen, but carries on his work," says Wesley. 1. *Successors divinely called*. Joshua specially chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. God's servants not self-called, nor put into office by friendship and worldly favour. "There is nothing in which a king would be more absolute than in the choice of his ministers. And shall we dare to contest and take away this right from the King of Kings?" *Quesnel*. 2. *Successors specially qualified*. Joshua specially gifted and trained by service. More than natural endowment required. "None but he who made the world can make a minister of the gospel," said Newton. None selected for important work enters it at his own charge. God equips and helps.

**III. God gives encouragement to those who carry on his work.** Fellow workers may fall, but God compensates for loss. 1. *By his presence*, "He will go over before thee," ver. 3. If under the inspiration of Alexander, Cæsar, and other great leaders, soldiers have performed exploits, what can we not do with God present! Failure impossible with him! 2. *By his promise*. Presence animates, but accompanied with promise often makes soldiers irresistible. God's promises may be trusted, God's bonds given and sealed with his own hand. "He will not fail thee, &c." 3. *By his help*. Promise must issue in performance. God is strength for burdens and a shield for battles. His grace makes the heart stout and the arm strong. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."

#### A GLORIOUS PAST.—Verse 4.

1. *A godly people will always have a glorious past*. Israel's past, England's past. A Christian man looks back upon a wonderful past-enlightenment, for-

givenness and adoption, great peace, great joy, and great hope. Nothing little in redemption. God's gifts like himself. "Great and marvellous are thy works." 11. *This glorious past should not be forgotten.* The great things of God should be remembered, considered, and prompt to obedience. They are helpful for the present, pledges of God's faithfulness and power and types of future mercies. "The Lord shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you," ver 5.

### LIFE'S CONFLICTS.—*Verses 3-6.*

Israel about to engage in arduous warfare. God would help them, therefore they must not be discouraged. **I. Life a warfare.** *A soldier's* life hardness endured, 2 Tim. ii. 3. Discomforts in camp, field duties, tedious marches, great and numerous foes to overcome (Sihon and Og), territories to gain, and a purpose to be accomplished.

**II. We are not sufficient in ourselves for this warfare.** In us no good thing. Our sufficiency for everything from God. 1. *We are weak.* Need strength and defence. Divine grace alone makes the heart stout and the arm strong. "We have no might against this company." 2. *We are timid.* "Fear not," "Cowardice hath made us by-words to our enemies" (*Shaks.*), and a disgrace to our captain. Swedenborg says, "Charles II. did not know what that was which others called fear." Fear not, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage." 3. *We are afraid.* Danger frightens, enemies overawe, and we forebode evil. We fight with shadows and waste our strength. "Thou shalt not be afraid of them; but shalt remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, &c," Deu. vii. 18.

**III. In God we may have confidence to help.** "The Lord thy God, he doth go with thee." Not much behind, nor too far before, with thee, to guide, Prov. xx. 24; xvi. 9; provide, Heb. xiii. 5; and help, Jos. i. 5. Confidence; 1. *In the word of God.* The promise counteracts tendency to doubt and faint, fitted to produce and support assurance. 2. *In the faithfulness of God.* He never modifies, retracts, nor forgets his word. He wills and intends to fulfil it. Nothing can make him recede from his merciful purpose, nor cause him to repent or violate his pledge. "The strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent." 3. *In the presence of God.* "He will go over before thee," ver 3. God with Moses, God with Joshua, God with every good man—with thee. Grand words to begin an undertaking and conquest, to encourage in life's dangers and toils! "Understand, therefore, this day that the Lord thy God is he who goeth over before thee, &c.," Deu. ix. 3. 4. *In the strength of God.* He increases our might, makes us more than ourselves, more than a match for any foe. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life," Jos. i. 5. "They that war against thee shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought, Is. xli. 13.

### THE CHOSEN LEADER.—*Verses 7, 8.*

In the choice of Joshua, Moses displays his greatness and intense anxiety for his people. No excessive grief, nor unavailing remorse. He appoints a successor not out of his own family or from his own choice, but according to God's will (*cf.* Num. xxvii. 15).

**I. A leader specially qualified for the work.** Joshua was honoured and qualified in an eminent degree. 1. *Trained under Moses.* He was the minister, the servant of Moses (Jos. i. 1). With him on the Mount (Ex. xxiv. 13), and a companion in the camp. 2. *Qualified by God.* Filled with the spirit of wisdom, courage, and the fear of God (Deut. xxxiv. 9). As leader under a theocracy he was to act as the minister of God, wait for instructions from God, and shepherd or lead the people as the flock of God (Num. xxvii. 17).

**II. A leader publicly chosen.** "In the sight of all Israel" designated to office. By a solemn rite set apart (Num. xxvii. 18). 1. *To indicate the solemnity of the charge.* 2. *To set forth its responsibility.* 3. *To identify himself with the people.* 4. *To gain the sympathy of the people.* "Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it" (Deut. i. 38).

**III. A leader specially encouraged.** Though courageous and resolute he required help. The work was new, long, and arduous. He felt inferior to Moses, and knew the perverseness of the people. 1. *Divinely guided.* Jehovah would go before him. What help and inspiration in this thought. "There is no inspiration so great as to feel the influence of a spirit greater and nobler than our own. When we listen to his voice, when we are ready to do his will, our whole nature is liberated and exalted, and out of this the greatest and noblest work comes" (*Dr. Allon*). 2. *Divinely assisted.* "He will not fail thee." Joshua not faint-hearted, but humble; hence cheered, often encouraged to "be strong." If God be with us, what account those against us! Who can defeat Divine wisdom or overcome Omnipotence! In God's work God's servants never alone, never forsaken. Joshua took the reins of government and led the tribes to the conquest of Canaan. Brave in counsel and brave in war, he trusted in God and accomplished his charge. Be you courageous, hold the divine commands sacred and in spite of opposition yield full and hearty obedience. This is true wisdom and gains true success. "Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (do wisely)" (Jos. i. 8).

"He holds no parley with unmanly fears,  
Where duty bids he confidently steers,  
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,  
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *Thou shalt not go over.*  
1. Best men not infallible, may sin.  
2. Consequences of one sin most serious.  
3. God impartial and just in punishing sin.

never shall the covenant of his faithfulness fail."

Vers. 3-6. **I. A disheartened people.** Great leader lost. Great work to be done. Our work to dethrone enemies, enter lands, establish and maintain the worship of God and the Kingdom of Christ. "The children of Judah could not drive them out." **II. A sufficient God.** "With thee" in presence; "before thee" in providence; abiding in strength "not fail thee."—"The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but

Vers. 6-8. **Antidote to fear.** "Fear not." **I.** He is *able* to help thee: He will not fail thee, in adversity or prosperity—will guard thee against the immediate dangers of the one, and the seductive influences of the other. **II.** He is *willing* to help thee: not able merely, but willing also. **III.** He has *promised* to help thee: and his promises are always sure. Learn (1) Rely on God's power; (2) Trust in his promises (*Biblical Museum*).—*God's Providence the ground of contentment* (cf. Heb. xiii. 5). "He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." **1.**



*Then cherish no distressing care*—"one hair white or black"—"cast your care upon him." 2. *Then cease to devise your own plans.* We scheme for our children and our business, tempt providence and take destiny into our own hands. God's will supreme. "Commit thy way to him, &c." 3. *Then exercise implicit faith in God*; (1) whose promise is sure; (2) whose power is omnipotent; (3) whose providence is universal. *Be strong.* "The Septuagint in this and the following verse have *play the man*, and *be strong*. From this St. Paul seems to have borrowed his ideas (1 Cor. xvi. 13.) Stand firm in the faith;

play the man, act like heroes; be vigorous."—*A. Clarke.*

Vers. 7, 8. *Appointment of Joshua to succeed Moses.* Consider: 1. The concern of Moses for the people committed to him. In this he acted as—1. as a true patriot; 2. a faithful minister. II. The gracious provision which God made for them: 1. He selected a suitable person for the office; 2. He prescribed the mode of his ordination to it. (Num. xxvii. 15-17; 3. He promised him all needful assistance in it. Learn (1) the blessedness of the Christian Church; (2) the duty of advancing in every possible way its best interest.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

#### THE INHERITED VOLUME.—Verses 9, 13, 19, 22, 24-26.

Moses now commits the law which he had written into the hands of the priests and elders, the religious and secular rulers of the congregation, to be read and preserved for future generations.

**I. The Law to be written.** "Moses wrote this law." This a natural and safe method of transmission. More secure, complete, and diffusive than oral tradition. In this method titles and estates are handed down, arts and sciences propagated. This law has to rank in the literature of Israel as a story-book for children and a statute book for all. Hence written and carefully preserved in the archives of the nation. "Write in a book."

**II. The Law to be read.** Strict are regulations on this point. 1. *Read at festivals.* Four instances given (Jos. viii. 30; 2 Chron. xvii. 7; xxxiv. 30; Neh. viii. 7). *a.* "In the year of release" (ver. 10). When servants were discharged, debtors acquitted, and all had leisure to read. Spare time and special occasions should be devoted to Bible reading. *b.* "In the feast of tabernacles." Most appropriate season, as revealing the source and purifying the nature of their joy—connecting the design of the law with the spirit of the festival. 2. *Read in public assemblies.* "In the place" of assembly (ver. 11). Bible reading important part of religious worship—needful for instruction, reverence and edification—a privilege to meet in God's house to expound the law and review His mercies. 3. *Read to all classes.* Old and young, and strangers within the gates (ver. 12). All classes interested—home-born and aliens, bond and free, must be taught the word of God. There is no hesitation, no fear of giving the law to the common people. It is their right and privilege that they may hear, love, and obey God.

**III. The law to be preserved** (vers. 24-26). What was written, was needful to preserve for that and future nations. A second copy of the law was deposited in the ark for greater reverence and security. 1. *Preserved as a rule of life.* "That they may hear, learn, and obey" (ver. 12). Men apt to forget what God requires. Philosophy and reason do not supply a standard of duty. In the Bible, and the Bible alone, have we a guide sufficient and unsurpassed—a book to make us wise unto salvation. 2. *Preserved as a witness against disobedience.* Memory may fail and teachers die; but the law abides firm and

faithful in its testimony. Solemn to have God's law and neglect it—to turn the blessing into a curse and the best of books into a witness against us. Every sermon we hear, every chapter we read, will help or finally condemn. "Take heed how ye hear."

### THE BIBLE IN NATIONAL HISTORY.

**I. As the Basis of its Religion.** Natural religion is founded on reason or the light of philosophy. Systems of belief are often refined speculations of mind, conflicting, uncertain, and insufficient. *Revealed* religion is spiritual, vital, and safe. The Bible alone reveals God and moral duty, explains religious worship, and offers moral renovation. It is the foundation of faith and practice, and hope for the present and future life.

**II. As the Friend of its Education.** The Bible proves the necessity and the value of education. It fosters and promotes intelligence among the masses, helps to rear noble institutions, to enlighten and refine society. It has given the world new ideas and impulses not found in the province of letters. Superb themes for poetry, painting, and fine arts, and thus the highest enjoyment and most exalted thoughts have been furnished by the Bible.

**III. As the Source of its Progress.** In the Bible are strong innate principles to civilize and elevate. Where these principles are practised we find refinement, free institutions, and the blessings of liberty. Morals are purified, commercial enterprise encouraged, cruelties and war abolished. How much is England indebted to the Bible? What is the condition of countries where the Bible is fettered, exiled or unknown? It is source of progress in learning, legislation, and religion. It is not dead or effete yet. Its mission is great and sublime. It is emphatically the Book for the people, the Book for the nation, and the Book for the age.

This lamp from off the everlasting throne,  
Mercy took down, and in the night of time  
Stood casting on the dark her gracious bow,  
And evermore beseeching men, with tears,  
And earnest sighs, to read, believe, and live.—*Pollok, Bk. 1*

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 7–13. *Methods of propagating Scripture.* By writing or printing, by public reading or expounding. Let us be thankful for a complete and printed Bible. The heritage of the past and the trust of the present. "Unto them were committed the oracles of God."

*The Bible and the children.* Revealing God to children, prescribing duties to children, fostering the spirit to perform these duties, and ensuring the happiness of children. The Bible an entrancing book to children, in its spirit, examples, and lessons. *The Bible in the family.* The Bible should be read in the family. When read

rightly it promotes domestic comfort, cleanliness, industrious and provident habits; it purifies the affections and fills the dwelling with joy in poverty and depression of trade.—("The Cotter's Saturday night.")—"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."

Vers. 10–12. Directions here given for public reading of the law. 1. To be read at "the feast of tabernacles," the greatest of all their festivals, when harvest and vintage being completed, they had most leisure to attend to it. This feast was celebrated in "the year of release," the most proper time

that could be chosen for reading the law; for then the people were freed from debts, troubles, and cares of a worldly nature, and at liberty to attend to it, without distraction. 2. The law was to be read by Joshua, chief governor, and by others who had the charge of instructing the people. Thus Joshua himself read to the congregation Jos. viii. 34, 35; Josiah and Ezra, 2 Chr. xxxiv. 30; Neh. viii. 2. But Jehoshaphat employed priests and Levites (2 Chr. xvii. 9). This public reading was in part the duty of the king, the Jews say, who began it, and that afterwards it was taken up by the priests. 3. The law was to be read in the hearing of all Israel (ver. 11). (1) Pious Jews who had copies doubtless read in their own houses. (2) Some portion was read in the synagogue every Sabbath day (Acts xv. 21). (3) In Jehoshaphat's time it was read by his command in the different cities of Judah, and the people were in-

structed out of it by the priests and Levites, but (4) at every year of release the law was read, not only publicly to all the people, but throughout, and read from an original copy, which served as a standard by which all other copies were tried. 4. The whole congregation must assemble to hear the law. Hence learn (1) that when our debts are remitted and we are brought into the liberty of God's children we shall then delight to hear and obey our delivering Lord in every call of duty. (2) The word of God being our only rule, should be read and known of all; how cruel the attempt, and how contrary to the Divine will, to keep it locked up from the people in an unknown tongue, and to establish ignorance by law! (3) Nothing should engage us more solicitously than the early instruction of our children in the knowledge of the holy Scriptures, which alone can make them wise unto salvation.—*J. Wilson.*

#### A SOLEMN MEETING.—*Verses 14-16, 23.*

Moses commanded to present himself with Joshua in the tabernacle, the circumstances in which they met, and the charge they received, made the meeting memorable and solemn.

**I. The persons who met, made the meeting solemn.** Not the congregation, but the leaders. Numbers interest, excite and create enthusiasm. When few meet together in private prayer or Sunday class, the occasion is often solemn. Prayers more ardent and appeals more effectual. God meets with two or three.

**II. The place in which they met made the meeting solemn.** The tabernacle, the special dwelling of Jehovah, filled with his glory, the cloud outside and inside. The utmost done to invest the place with peculiar sanctity. Repeatedly is the injunction given: "Ye shall reverence my sanctuary." In our sinful and weak condition we need manifestations to excite awe, and glory tempered with clouds to encourage access.

**III. The purpose for which they met made the meeting solemn.** 1. Moses to receive intimation of his death. "Thou shalt die." Solemn message! but no grief nor murmuring. His chief concern for a successor (Num. xxvii. 16). He was not unprepared, but resigned, ready and responded to the call. Could we face a sentence like this? Our death will be a personal approach to God. "Set thine house in order." 2. Joshua to be inaugurated to office. Publicly designated before. But a higher sanction required to encourage the leader himself, and beget the respect and obedience of a fickle and perverse people. We should ever listen to the voice of God and feel that his equipment is needful for every enterprise. 3. Both to hear of future apostacy, Moses would grieve and intercede; Joshua would be aware of danger and strive to avert it.



Sad predictions, casting shadows of fear in the hour of death and upon the entrance of office. But whatever brings us near to God, and prepares for the events of life or death is profitable.

'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical love,  
And coming events cast their shadows before.

—T. Campbell.

### THE DARK PROSPECT—Verses 16–21.

What human insight could pronounce such a future, especially when the moral condition of the people and present signs seemed to contradict it. What human legislator would give laws and predict that his subjects would break them! What a proof is this of the divine origin of this sacred book!

**I. The chosen people turning into apostates.** Disowning their relation "to go a whoring after other Gods." 1. *Unfaithful in special trust* (ver. 20). Received the land, yet neglected to drive out its people, the least unfaithfulness may bring a curse, as the weakest footstep or the slightest breath may cause an avalanche to entomb a village. 2. *Ungrateful for innumerable favours* (ver. 20). Fed upon the gifts and forgot the giver. Indulged in sensual enjoyments, abused prosperity, "according to their pasture so were they filled; they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me" (Hos. xiii. 6)." 3. *Rebellious against divine laws*. "Break my covenant." Forgetful of dependence, proud of their position, they were a law unto themselves. Having thrown off allegiance to God, "they turn unto other gods."

**II. Divine Goodness turned into Divine Wrath.** "Then my anger shall be kindled against them," ver. 17. God's relations to us and dealings with us, according to our conduct. 1. *Anger most severe*. "Many evils and troubles shall befall them." 2. *Anger most destructive*. "They shall be devoured." Fearful aspect of God. "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." 3. *Anger in recompense to sin*. "Are not these evils because God is not among us," ver. 17. Sin ever brings its own retribution, and presumptuous sins defy God's authority. He justly casts off those who rebel against him, withdraws protection and prosperity, and leaves them to suffer the consequences of their own sins. "I will punish them (visit upon) for their ways, and reward (return to) them their doings, Hos., iv. 7.

**III. Special Checks failing in desired results.** Ver. 21. The example and influence of Moses, the anointing and authority of Joshua, the declaration of law, and the presence of death itself, were expedients to prevent evil. Restraints are needful for the individual and the nations. But when men's hearts are "fully set in them to do evil," neither affliction, the checks of conscience, nor the restraints of providence will hinder. "A stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their hearts aright," ever wavered in allegiance, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God," Ps. lxxviii. 8.

**IV. Severe punishment without remedy.** Indications of God's displeasure were many, but the greatest punishment was the "hiding of his face from them on that day." In the darkest day, in the greatest trouble we may rejoice in the light of his countenance. But if God hide his face from us, and forsake us, prayer avails not, our sun is turned into darkness and life into mourning. 1. *Enquiry can find no escape*, ver. 17. Are these evils not the result of God's withdrawal? Let us consult and try to discover escape. Intense anxiety and earnest search in vain. "Thou shalt not escape out of his hand." 2. *Future prospect affords no escape*, ver. 18. Future condition would be worse than the present; sin and servitude, judgment and deliverance marked

their history, but changed not their disposition, Judg. ii. 19. God was provoked; his anger was kindled. "They were devoured (consumed with affliction) and troubles befell (found) them because forsaken of God, ver. 17. Such is the dark prospect of the sinner. God warns and urges escape. "Stand in awe and sin not."

"Take heed, for God holds vengeance in His hand  
To hurl upon their heads that break his law."—*Shakespeare*.

### A SONG FOR THE PEOPLE—*Verses 19-26.*

Laws, history and proverbs often put into verse. The valour and praises of famous men often sung at feasts. National songs are retained in the memories and stir the deepest feelings of a people. This song of Moses (ch. 2), composed by divine inspiration, to be learnt by Israel and taught their children in every age. Poetry and prose, the energy of heart and tones of voice should be consecrated to God. "Teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," etc.

**I. The song in its form.** "Write this song." This the best method for preserving and transmitting divine revelations to mankind, more natural, secure, complete and diffusive than oral testimony.

**II. The song in its design.** 1. *To reverse God's mercy* (ver. 20). In making the covenant bestowing the land, and giving prosperity. It commemorates God's sovereign mercy and rich provision for his people. "Put it in their mouths" that it may stir their hearts. "Sing unto the Lord." 2. *To justify God's proceeding.* "That this song may be a witness for me." In forewarning of danger, checking tendencies to fall into it, and persuading to love and obedience. The word tells truth, points out duty, and will witness for God in apostacy and punishment. 3. *To humble the people.* The song reminded of dependence, "was well suited to inspire the popular mind with a sense of God's favour to their nation." A nation sinful, rebellious and unworthy. If it did not prevent apostacy it would lead to penitence and humility. "It shall not be forgotten."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16. *Thou shalt sleep* (may lie down). Old Testament conception of death. 1. Life a period of work. 2. Death a rest, a lying down. 3. But there will be a rising up, an awakening from this sleep (*cf.* Ps. lxxvi. 6; Dan. xii. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 13; 2 Peter iii. 4). 4. This resurrection a gathering to good men. Death not dominion for ever, cuts not off from Holy patriarchs and companions—"Thou shalt be gathered unto thy people" (Num. xxvii. 13).

Ver. 19. *A witness for me.* 1. Of his kindness in giving them so many blessings. 2. Of His patience in bearing so long with them. 3. Of His

clemency in giving them such fair and plain warnings, and, 4. Of His justice in punishing such an unthankful, perverse and incorrigible people.—*J. Wilson*.

Ver. 20. Notice—1. Selfish indulgence. 2. Sinful pride. 3. Abominable idolatry associated with—(a) debasing service; (b) Open rebellion; (c) Divine provocation—sinus most unnatural, most dangerous. "How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods. When I fed them to the full they committed adultery." (Jer. v. 7).

THE FAITHFUL AMANUENSIS.—*Verses 11, 24–26, 30.*

**I. The work in which he was engaged.** “Write ye this.” Ancient kings copied the law. Monks in the Scriptorium, careful and devout, exact and conscientious, have preserved learning and handed down Manuscripts. Let us be thankful for the alphabet, printing, and the arts of civilization!

**II. The method in which he prosecuted the work.** 1. *Patient in spirit.* Slow process, not like printing, to write. 2. *Preserving in effort.* “Until they were finished” (ver. 24).—*Ven. Bede.* 3. *Mindful of the end in view.* Under solemn sense of responsibility for correctness, knowing the future consequences, yet he completes and preserves the work. 4. He recites what he writes, vocalises the word, “speaks in their ears” (ver. 28), to help the memory and impress the heart. “The manner of reading among the Orientals is not less peculiar than the style of their writing. Generally speaking, the people seem not to understand a book till they have made it vocal. They usually go on reading aloud, with a kind of singing voice, moving their heads and bodies in time, and making a monotonous cadence at regular intervals; thus giving emphasis, although not such as would please an English ear” (*cf.* Acts viii. 27–40).

THE SOLEMN WARNING AGAINST FUTURE IDOLATRY.—*Verses 27–30.*

Israel is again admonished of duty, solemnly forewarned of sad consequences of defection and to this very day this song is strong proof to Jew and Gentile that Moses spoke by inspiration of God.

**I. Divine Foresight of Israel's Sins.** “I know that after my death, &c.” (verse 29). Israel would decline from God, corrupt themselves, provoke God's anger and bring fearful calamities upon themselves. God knows all future events. Nothing surprises him or happens unknown. Eternity is unveiled before him and nothing is concealed from him. “Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising and understandest my thought afar off.”

**II. Solemn Warning of certain results of Israel's Sins.** Self degradation, divine provocation and a series of calamities enough to cause bitter reflection! All this warning in love, to deter from sin. Threatenings should alarm, rouse to repentance and return to God. When evil is foreseen we should hide ourselves (Prov. xxii. 3). Disciples fled from impending evil (Matt. x. 23). Paul hid himself from threatened destruction (Acts xvii. 4; xxiii. 17). “Noah moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house.”

**III. Solemn Warnings disregarded and threatened results experienced.** The testimony of song, the death of Moses, and the checks of providence did not prevent from sin. The presence of good men may restrain, but not eradicate evil. The expedients of God may fail. The very sins at which men are astonished may be committed, and they may rush madly on to sufferings. “Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing.” No force without, not even the *divine* law—as law merely—commanding and punishing can conquer the will. God alone by his spirit and grace can renew and control. “Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.”

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 21. God's intimate knowledge of future evil. 1. *In its root.* Their imagination. “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart (Heb. whole

imagination, the purposes and desires) only evil continually (every day)” Gen. vi. 5. 2. *In its fruits.* Troubles which befall them. “As a man that



knows what roots he hath in his garden, though not a flower appears, yet can say when the spring comes, this and this will come up because he knows the garden and knows what roots are there : so the Lord knows our thoughts afar off, because he knows the principles that are within, and knows what they will do when occasion serves ; he is privy to that root that beareth gall and wormwood " (*cf.* xxix. 18).—*Trapp*.

Vers. 21, 27, 29. God's service.  
1. Relaxed in practice. 2. Perverted in simplicity. 3. Secularised in spiri-

tuality, and 4. Debased in dignity. Sad sight ! Offensive to God ! Imagination, thought, and purpose, corrupt, evil and only evil. The root of violence and oppression, wantonness and luxury (*Jas.* i. 15 ; *Mt.* xv. 19.) " *I know thy rebellion*" verse 27. Not an unconcerned spectator, but as one injured and affronted, as a tender father sees the folly and stubbornness of a disobedient child who *displeases* and *grieves* him.

He that shuts love out, in turn shall  
Be shut out from love, and on her threshold  
lie  
Howling in outer darkness.—*Tennyson*.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 2. *Old*. Life is the ordinance of God. Nothing more shows Divine Sovereignty than the time and place of our birth, the duration of our life and the circumstances of our death.—*G. S. Bowes*.

Vers. 3-6. *Work*. Whatever be the meanness of a man's occupation, he may discharge and prosecute it on principles common to him with Michael or Gabriel, of any of the highest spirits of heaven.—(*Binney*.) *Courage*. Ver. 6. Is there one whom difficulties dishearten—who bends to the storm ? He will do little. Is there one who *will* conquer ? That kind of man never fails.—(*John Hunter*.)

Vers. 7, 8. *Joshua chosen*.

God sends his teachers with every age,  
To every clime and every race of man,  
With revelations fitted to their growth  
And shape of mind.—(*Lowell*).

Vers. 9-13. *Delivered*. Tradition is the treasure of religious thought, amassed by ages upon the platform of positive revelation.—*Vinet*.

The Protestant bible lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten—like the sound of church bells, which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words. It is a part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness ; . . . the memory of the dead passes into it. The potent

traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representative of his best moments, and all that there has been about him of soft, and gentle, and pure, and penitent, and good, speaks to him for ever out of his English bible.—*Newman*.

Vers. 14, 15. Accidents occur nowhere so little as in the lives of men who have determined the history and progress of man. *Moses*, the man of God, was a man made of God for men.—*Fairbairn*.

Call *Joshua*.

The old order changeth, yielding place to  
new ;

And God fulfils himself in many ways.

—*Tennyson*.

Vers. 16-18, 20, 21, 27, 29. *It shall come to pass*.

Time, as he courses onwards, still unrolls  
The volume of concealment. In the future,  
As in the optician's glassy cylinder,  
The undistinguishable blots and colours  
Of the dim past collect and shape themselves,  
Upstarting in their own completed image  
To scare or to reward.—*S. T. Coleridge*.

Vers. 24-26. *End of writing*.

Do not for one repulse forego the purpose  
That you resolved to effect.—*Shakespeare*.

Vers. 19-30. *Song*. "Give me the making of the nation's ballads," said Lord Chatham, "and I care not who makes the laws."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

The song composed by Moses and recited to the people as a witness against them. "It embraces the whole future history of Israel, and bears all the marks of prophetic testimony in the perfectly ideal picture which it draws on the one hand, or the benefits and blessings conferred by the Lord upon His people; on the other hand of the ingratitude with which Israel repaid God for them all" (*cf. Delitz*). The poem divided into six parts.

1-3. Introductory, importance of doctrine delivered. Heaven and earth invoked not as matter of rhetoric, not to witness for God as *cf.* iv. 26; xxx. 19; xxxi. 28, but indicative of the whole universe, which would be affected and sanctified by the righteousness of God manifest in heaven and earth. Doctrine. Let my doctrine, a prayer. Rain with soft penetrating influence (Is. lv. 10-11). Greatness equivalent to glory in Ps. xxix. 1; xcvi. 7, 8.

4-6. The righteousness of God placed in contrast with the corruption, perversity and folly of Israel. Rock—first time God so called in scripture and used six times in this song. A name often found in phrases (for Heb. *Tsur*) like "strength" (Ps. lxxiii. 26; cxli. 1), or "Mighty One" (Is. xxx. 29). Perfect blameless, without fault. On contrary Israel acted corruptly (ver. 5). They have. The verb is singular. Render. "It (*i.e.* "the perverse and crooked generation," understood from the context) hath corrupted itself before Him" (*cf.* Is. i. 4); they are 'not his children, but their blemish," *i.e.*, the generation of evil doers cannot be styled God's children, but rather the shame and disgrace of God's children" (*Speak. Com.*) Crooked (*cf.* Mt. xvii. 7; Luke ix. 41.) Foolish (ver. 6; *cf.* 4, 6; Ps. xc. 12). Bought, acquired thee for His own. Made a nation.

7-14. Innumerable benefits conferred. Blessings given from the very first days of old (ver. 7). Divided (ver. 8) by His providence. Set bounds, reserved for His people a fit inheritance "according to the number," proportionate to the wants of the population. Portion (ver. 9), lot or piece of land; here a figure applied to the nation (*cf.* Ex. xv. 16; xix. 5). (Ver. 10-14) Helpless and hopeless condition of Israel, and love and care which God displayed. Waste, *lit.*, in the land of the desert and the waste ("formless waste" as Gen. i. 2) howling wilderness, amid ferocious beasts. Apple guarded as the tenderest part (*cf.* Ps. xvii. 8; Prov. vii. 2). Eagle noted for its care and affection (Ex. xix. 4; Is. lxiii. 9). 12. So the Lord alone delivered Israel and trained them. 13. Ride high positions in which they gained dominion (*cf.* xxxiii. 29). Honey, richest provisions from fruitful fields and unlikely places.

15-18. Base ingratitude for benefits. Jeshurun only found here and in xxxiii. 5, and Is. xlv. 2. A description of a nation right and just, "not the character which belonged to Israel in fact, but that to which Israel was called." An epithet intended to convey keen reproof. Fat. The figure of an ox, fat and intractable in consequence (Is. x. 27; Hos. iv. 16). Forsook, rejected. Esteemed, *lit.* to treat as a fool, to despise (Mic. vii. 6). Rock in Palestine, a refuge from enemies. Jealousy (ver. 16), language from matrimonial relationship (Ex. xxxiv. 14; Is. liv. 5; Jer. ii. 25). Devils (ver. 17), false gods, malignant and destructive (Lev. xvii. 7). Not to God, *Marg.* Not God, *i.e.*, which were not God. Gods who had not benefitted them. Newly up, from near, from Moab, Amon and Canaan in a local sense; or in contrast to Jehovah, who had manifested Himself of old (ver. 7).

19-22. God's rejection of Israel. Abhorred, despised, cast them off. Provoked by sins. Daughters, women had full share (Is. iii. 16; Jer. vii. 18). See, I will show what their end will be at last.—(*Ainsworth*). No faith, no dependence upon them. Ver. 21, The terms, "not God" and "vanities" (nothings) were preferred, and God moved to anger. God would therefore excite them to jealousy, and ill-will by a "no-people" and "foolish nation," *i.e.*, transfer blessings upon them instead of Israel. (Ver. 22) When kindled divine anger would burn to lowest hell, the deepest destruction of *sheol*, the lower world, consume earth's produce and set on fire foundations of mountains.

23-28. Evils threatened many and severe, like arrows which warriors shoot at foes (Ps. xxxviii. 3; xci. 5; Job vi. 4. Burning heat, *i.e.*, fever of pestilence, famine, plague, wild beasts, poisonous serpents and war, would bring them to verge of destruction. (Ver. 26) Scatter them away and blot out their remembrance. (Ver. 27) Were it not that I feared, *i.e.*, that I should be provoked to wrath when the enemy ascribed the overthrow of Israel to his own prowess and not to my judgments.—(*Speak. Com.*) Hand over hand was high, *i.e.*, lifted up, shown itself mighty. For the reason they deserved not to be spared.

29-33. The reasons which lead to severity. They were foolish. Latter end, to which they were obstinately rushing, *i.e.*, destruction if not averted. (Ver. 30) Chase. If wise, conquest would be easy and the promise (Lev. xxvi. 8) fulfilled. But abandoned for their apostacy

"sold" and "delivered up." (Ver. 31) **Their rock**, gods in whom heathens trust, were felt to be unequal to Israel's God or Rock. **Judges**. "Having experienced so often the formidable might of God, they knew for a certainty that the God of Israel was very different from their own idols."—(*Calvin*). **Their vine** worse than the vine of Sodom, universally corrupt, like Sodom and Gomorrah in wickedness. **Bitter** (cf. 2 Kings iv. 39-41; Is. v. 2-4; Jer. ii. 21). Figures which express that "nothing could be imagined worse, or more to be abhorred than that nation."—(*Calvin*).

**34-43**. God's purpose to have mercy upon Israel when chastened and humbled. This wickedness before mentioned and judgments upon it. **Store** remembered and sealed up in a bag as a treasure carefully kept (Job xiv. 17; Hos. xiii. 17). **Vengeance**, active vindication of authority. **Slide**, they will totter and fall, firm as they think themselves to be (Ps. xxxviii. 17; xciv. 18). (Ver. 36) **Judge** (cf. Ps. cxxxv. 14; 1 Pet. iv. 17). **Repent himself**, have compassion, help them. **None**, proverbial for all men (cf. 1 Kings xiv. 10; xxi. 21; 2 Kings iv. 8; xiv. 6), bond and free; none to help. (Ver. 37) Idols utterly worthless, to which Israel had brought sacrifices and drink offerings. **Rise up** (Jer. ii. 28). (Ver. 39) "*See now that I, I am.*" Experience enough to convince them that idols were impotent and that Jehovah alone should be feared. **Kill** (1 Sam. ii. 6; 2 Kings v. 7). God smites and heals (Job v. 17; Hos. vi. 1; Is. xxx. 26; lvii. 17). (Vers. 40-42) These verses are closely connected. The full stop in the A.V. at the end of verse 40 should be removed, and the passage should run thus: *For I lift up my hand to heaven and say, as I live for ever, if I whet, etc.* In verse 40, in which God is describing as swearing by Himself (cf. Is. xlv. 23; Jer. xxii. 5; Heb. vi. 17). The lifting up of the hand was a gesture used in making oath (cf. Gen. xiv. 22; Rev. x. 5, 6).—(*Speak. Com.*) (Ver. 43) Rejoice in God's retribution upon enemies in his wiping out the guilt which rested upon people and land and thus exterminating idolatry.

**44-52**. A supplement added by the author, who inserted the song to the law. **Hoshea** (Num. xiii. 16). **Set**, give serious attention. **Life** (ver. 47), basis of all enjoyments and length of life. (Ver. 48) **Self-same day** on which Moses rehearsed this song, and on which announcement of death renewed (Num. xxvii. 12-14). "In form this repetition differs from previous announcement, partly in the fact that the situation of Mount Nebo is more fully described (in the land of Moab, etc., as in chap. i. 5; xxviii. 69), and partly in the continued use of the imperative and a few other trifling points. These differences may all be explained from the fact that the account here was not written by Moses himself."—(*Delitz*).

### THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVINE INSTRUCTION.—*Verses 1-6.*

The metaphors of this inimitable song of singular beauty, very suggestive and powerful. In many ways is the importance of Divine instruction set forth.

**I. By its lofty theme.** Israel's God is made known in wonderful attributes. "I will publish the name of the Lord. 1. *Perfect in character.* No injustice and iniquity found in him. A rock of omnipotence and immutability. Perfect in holiness, word and work. A God of truth—we charge God foolishly, but He never errs, forgets nor retracts. "*He cannot lie.*" "Our rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." 2. *Glorious in majesty.* "Greatness," royal splendour and power must be ascribed to him. We cannot add to His greatness. His perfections are infinite. We may acknowledge it and give Him glory due to His name. It is not the bright light of eternity, but the glory seen in the perfection of His works, the faithfulness of His word and the wisdom of His administration. 3. *Righteous in government.* "All His ways are judgment," mysterious and incomprehensible, but "the ways of the Lord are right." (Hos. xiv. 9). 4. *Immutable in purpose.* We are inconstant and foolish, He unchangeable in plan, counsel and ways. "With whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning."

**II. By its adaptation to our moral condition.** We need such a God to redeem and comfort, in whom we may trust and live. 1. As "the thirsty earth" (Ps. lxxii. 6). We need the rain, divine influence to soften our hearts and lives. We are barren and unfruitful in the works and ways of God. Ignorant of His truth and will, until "the doctrine drops as rain." 2. As "the grass," we require fertilising showers to refresh, quicken and cause the seeds of



knowledge to grow. This doctrine of God is like the dew, gentle and insinuating, powerful and productive. The word "shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, etc." (Is. lv. 10, 11).

**III. By its interested witnesses.** Heaven and earth appealed to as august spectators. Such appeals often in matters of high importance (Ps. l. 3, 4; Is. i. 2; Jer. xxii. 29). This not a splendid instance of poetical apostrophe, but indicative of an interested universe. A summons to all intelligent beings to listen to the grand truths unfolded by this inspired ode. The doctrine concerns all mankind and should be known by all mankind. If neglected heaven and earth will witness to their stupidity and disobedience. "Heaven shall reveal his iniquity and the earth shall rise up against him" (Job xx. 27).

**IV. By its benevolent design.** A charge is made against Israel, whose character was the reverse of that of Jehovah, whose condition was helpless and deplorable. God deals in rectitude and love, and the writer is an example in tender expostulation and heavenly aim, to the poet and the minister. 1. *To impart wisdom.* "O! foolish people and unwise." Doubly foolish in forsaking God, who bought, made and established them. "Fools indeed, to disoblige one on whom you have such necessary dependence. To forsake your own mercies for lying vanities." "Who hath bewitched (fascinated, demented) you?" Gal. iii. 1. 2. *To rectify judgment.* "A perverse and crooked generation." Perverted, froward, and untractable in thought and purpose; crooked, irregular and disorderly in life. God seeks to enlighten and correct them. "That ye may be blameless and harmless (sincere) in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine, as lights (luminaries or beacons) in the world" (Phil. ii. 15). 3. *To restore the divine image.* Likeness to God is the characteristic of His children. Sin defiles and degrades as spots in the face or dirt on the garment. It corrupts and destroys like putrefaction in the body. Grace delivers from sin, restores the divine image and makes us "sons of God." 4. *To kindle fervent gratitude.* Israel's base return for redemption and advancement, innumerable privileges and unprecedented honours. "Do ye thus requite the Lord?" We condemn the Jews, yet imitate their conduct. God has delivered and exalted us, yet we do not feel that gratitude is required, reasonable and just. God daily loads with benefits that we may render in return (Ps. cxvi. 12). Appeals to our sense of right for a natural and willing return for mercies so constant and so great.

#### THE REVELATION OF GOD.—*Verses 4-6.*

The doctrine of this song is a revelation concerning God. A declaration of his name—a name expressing his qualities and distinguishing him from all other gods. This name must be *published*, for if the name drop out of use, the being who owns it may be forgotten. 1. *In the splendour of his perfections.* *Jehovah* the Great I am—independent and self-existent. The infinite, eternal and immutable God. Perfectly just and infinitely holy. Each attribute is capable of distinct contemplation. All blended together constitute divine excellence, like colours of light in the rainbow. 2. *In the rectitude of his moral government.* "His ways are judgment," that is accord with rectitude. He is essentially and absolutely just. *Reason* asserts that he can have no motive for injustice. Deeply fixed in the centre of *conscience* is this truth. The *Bible* continually sets forth that "there is no unrighteousness in him." "Just and right is he," in person and procedure. "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." 3. *In the assertion of his rights.* "Is not he thy father that hath bought thee?" 1. *Rights as Creator.*—"Hath he not

made thee?" 2. *Rights as a Covenant God.* "Thy father."—We owe to him homage, love and obedience. "Thou O Lord, art our Father and Redeemer, thy name is for everlasting" (Is. lxiii. 16). Let us think of God as here revealed, the absolute and the relative God, until our hearts are stirred to gratitude, reverence and devotion. "Behold God is great and we know Him not."

Return, my senses, range no more abroad,  
He only finds his bliss who seeks for God.

—Parnell.

### THE DEW OF THE WORD.—Ver. 2.

"Distil as the dew." Who hears the dew fall? What microphone could reveal that music to our "gross unpurged ears?" *The dew distils in silence.* So does the speech of God. In stillness God's love is condensed into dewlike communications; not read, nor heard, but known by direct power of the spirit upon the soul. Not much in noise, turmoil, and bustle. Dew falls in wider silence, in quiet places of sorrow and sickness; more in the desert than in hot harvest fields or neat gardens, from which we have been called. *The dew distils in darkness.* Not in the darkness of external trial merely, but in times when we cannot see anything; when we do not seem to be walking in darkness, but, like Micah, "*sit in darkness*," too feeble even to grope; times of reaction and weariness after special work, after great or exciting success, even after unusually vivid spiritual blessing. You look out some dark night: there is no storm, no rain, not the least token to your senses of what is going on. In the morning you see every blade and leaf tipped with a dew drop, everything revived and freshened, prepared for the heat of the day. So His words fall on your souls in darkness, not with sensible power; nothing flashes out from the page, nothing shines to shed pleasant light on your path. You do not hear sound of abundance of rain, but the words are distilling as the dew and preparing you for day. *The dew falls* not in one mass of water, but innumerable *little drops*. What one drop does not reach another does. It is not one overwhelmingly powerful word which does this holy night work in the soul, but the unrealized influences of many, dropping softly on the plants of the Lord; one resting here, another there; one touching an unrecognised need, another reaching an unconsciously failing grace. "Each drop uncounted hath its own mission, and is duly sent to its own leaf or blade." Sometimes God's dew *goes on falling many hours of night*. Watches seem long and starlight does not reveal it. But none is lost; some is already doing hidden work as it falls around the very roots of our being, some ready to be revealed in sparkling brightness when the night is over; lessons learnt among the shadows to be lived out in the sunshine. *The object of the dew is to maintain life* in dry places and seasons. In rainless regions this better understood. Any dry week in summer we see enough to understand the beauty of the figure. This speech is spirit and life to souls, however feebly, yet really alive to God. Dew does nothing for stones, nor a dead leaf. It falls on little fading plants, whose leaves absorb life, renewing moisture, and closed blossoms open out again with fresher fragrance than before. Dryness is more to be dreaded than darkness. Be trustfully content to let the dew fall in the dark. Believe the Word, when you read the dim page or lie still through long hours of the night, with no power to meditate on half-recollected verses that cross the mind and leave no influence.—*F. R. Havergal.*

Softly the dew in the evening descends,  
Cooling the sun-heated ground and the gale;  
Flow'rets all fainting it soothingly tends,  
Ere the consumings of mid-day prevail.  
Sweet, gentle dewdrops, how mystic you fall,  
Wisdom and mercy float down in you all.

—Rev. W. H. Havergal, *Last Hymn*, 1870.

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *My doctrine.* 1. Its nature.—Rain, dew, small rain, and showers. 2. Its operations. Drop, distil. *Rain, emblem of Holy Spirit.* 1. A timely blessing. When inheritance is weary. "He shall come down like rain upon the *mown* grass." 2. Bestowed in special seasons. "Early and latter rain." In youth and manhood in conversion and maturity. 3. Beneficial in results. Softens earth and prepares it for seed. "Thou makest it soft with showers." "Thou, O God, didst send (shake out) a plentiful (gracious) rain, whereby thou didst confirm (refreshedst) it, when it was weary, Ps. lxviii. 9.

*Dew, an emblem.* 1. In origin. "As a dew from the Lord that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." 2. In method of operations, (a) silently and imperceptibly. Not with observation, not in "the thunder of his power"; (b) Efficiently and beautifully. Vigour and freshness to the Church, "the dew unto Israel." Not in sweeping, destructive showers, but in gentle, penetrating influence; (c) resulting in good or evil. The savour of life or of death—cursing or blessing, Heb. vi., 7. "My speech, etc. My familiar, friendly, and affectionate speeches, shall descend gently and softly on the ear and heart, as the dew moistening and refreshing all around. In hot regions *dew* is often a substitute for rain; without it no fertility, where rain seldom falls. In such places only can the metaphor here used be felt in its perfection."—*A. Clarke*. No doubt these various expressions point out that great variety in the Word or Revelation of God, whereby it is suited to every *place, occasion, person and state*; "being profitable for doctrine, reproof, and edification in righteousness."—*Ibid*.

Ver. 4. *God a rock.* 1. *An immoveable foundation for hope.* Foundations of rocks, hidden, unsearchable to mortal eye, depths past finding out.

2. *An abiding security.* Protection and safety from burning, heat of the sun and hostile invasion of enemies. "A hiding place from the wind, covert from the tempest," &c. (Is. xxxii. 2.) "An image of God's omnipotent power, immutable purpose, faithfulness in mercy, truth and love," Ps. cxix. 89, 90. "A firm and everlasting refuge, a 'Rock of Ages,' Is. xxvi. 4. One age passeth away, and another, and a third, etc., but the rock remains. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower" (Prov. xviii. 10); "munition of rocks" (Is. xxxiii. 16); "rocks so deep, no pioneer can undermine them; so thick, no cannon can pierce them; so high, no ladder can scale them" (*Trapp*).

Ver. 5. *Spots of God's children.* Impatience, anger, idolatry, sectarian bitterness and prejudices, etc. *Sin generally.* 1. Spots of deepest dye. Not on surface, but ingrained like leopard's spots and Ethiopian's skin. 2. Spots which corrupt—all flesh corrupt—universal prevalence of disease, "the whole head sick and the heart faint," voluntary debasement and death. 3. Spots which cannot be washed away by man. Not even "with nitre" and "much sope," Jer. ii., 22. Only the blood of Christ can take away the stain and make whiter than snow."

Ver. 6. *Requite.* Ingratitude for mercies innumerable, distinguished, affectionate, and long continued. "Good turns aggravate unkindness, and our guilt is increased by our obligations. It is ingratitude that makes a godly man's sin so heinous, which otherwise would be far less than other men's, since his temptations are stronger and his resistance greater." *Trapp*. *Thy father?* Consider. I. That God sustains a fatherly relation towards us. See him our Father in: 1. The work of Creation. 2. The redemptive plan. 3. The workings of Providence. II. That as such we



owe him peculiar duties: 1. As our Father we ought to be like him. 2. We ought to obey him. 3. We ought to love him. III. That this relationship involves certain duties with regard to our fellow men. They are of the same family as we are. Then there should be: 1. Family union; 2. Family correspondence; 3. Family love. (*Bib. Museum.*)

#### RECOLLECTION OF PAST MERCIES.—*Verses 7-14.*

“Remember days of old,” from the beginning until now what God has done—Proper review, true enquiry into past history will lead to gratitude and trust.

**I. Special inheritance allotted to Israel by Divine Wisdom.** God the Great Proprietor made and peopled the earth. 1. *To each nation He assigned its portion.* “Divided to the nations their inheritance.”—From the sons of Noah separate nations were formed (Gen. x. 32). In growth and settlement they were not left to chance, permitted to scramble, nor to prey one upon another. Powerful states should never invade weak ones. Forced acquisitions are unjust, insecure; become sources of restlessness, corruption and revolt. “He hath determined the bounds of their habitation” (Acts xvii. 26). 2. *To Israel He had special reference in this arrangement.* Placed in the midst of the earth, Canaan was admirably suited for their residence. From this common centre, the report of God’s wonders and the glad tidings of salvation were easily spread to every part of the globe. 3. *In this arrangement the interests of the people themselves were secured.* The land gradually gained—its tribes depossessed “according to the number of the children of Israel.” They were preserved—became the most favoured, the most important nation upon earth. By position, training and divine wisdom made depositaries of revealed religion and prepared the world for the Messiah.

**II. Special Honour conferred upon Israel by Divine choice.** They were the Lord’s portion, and the lot of his inheritance. “The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for a peculiar treasure” (Ps. cxxxv. 4). Separated from heathens, elevated by privileges they were chosen “a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deut. vii. 6). Others were aliens, they were children, sons of God. Honours bestowed, special relationship indicate obligation to God. We are not to engross divine favours, but intended to be mediums, diffusers of it; not only to be blessed ourselves, but to be blessings to others. “I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”

**III. Special training of Israel by Divine Grace.** The beautiful figure sets forth Jehovah’s care and method of training his people. 1. *He sought them in solitude.* What sovereign grace! Few and lonely God desired and chose them. “At this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” 2. *He instructed them in ignorance.* Cut off from surrounding nations, God alone taught them: in laws and ordinances, rulers and prophets, events painful and pleasing. “He gave also his good spirit to instruct them” (Neh. ix. 20). 3. *He guarded them in journeys.* Led them about, not in the most direct, but in zigzag way, backwards and forwards. None are carried to heaven, directed in the way without hindrance, deflection and trouble. “I will bring the blind by a way they know not; I will lead them in paths they have not known.” 4. *He preserved them in danger.* “He kept him.” He healed the serpent’s bite; defended in assault; frustrated divination and enchantment; “reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” 5. *Trained them in love.* God’s

diligence and tender compassion set forth. As the least touch of the eye would be painful, so God feels when the humblest is illused, afflicted or assailed. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

**IV. Special exaltation of Israel by Divine Providence.** "He made him ride, etc." In Egypt they were oppressed and enslaved; in Canaan exalted and honoured. 1. *In victory over our enemies.* "With a high hand" were redeemed (Ex. xiv. 8); and by the might of God did they conquer numerous foes. "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." 2. *In superabundant provision.* The fields gave their increase and the rock its honey; oil from olives on rocky clefts, butter of kine and milk of sheep; lambs well-fed and cattle of finest breed; bread of the finest wheat and drink of purest grape "that he might eat." Most abundant, most fruitful are the rewards of obedience. The service of God is a land of beauty and productiveness. "He maketh peace in thy borders and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat" (Ps. xvii. 4-14; lxxxix. 16).

#### THE ROYAL SIMILITUDE.—Verse 11.

The king of birds combines more admirable qualities than any other fowl, and forms a royal similitude. It has strength to mount above all, swiftness to out-strip all, an eye that penetrates the very fountain of light, affection that draws forth its blood for its young, and a sagacity almost human in instructing and disciplining them, which is specially noted in our text.

Notice four things without doing violence to the similitude. 1. God uses *Divine admonitions*. "As the eagle stirreth up her nest." When time for young to leave nest, she moves it with gentleness and affection; she sees them sleeping, and unwilling to leave their first home, makes a noise, strikes her wings against surrounding branches, and then, having awakened them, disturbs them still further, and finally "stirreth up," turns the nest inside out, and compels them to take to crags of rocks, or boughs of trees. Thus did God to Israel, by moving the heart of Pharaoh against them when at ease by the flesh-pots of Egypt. God now stirs up his people, who are unwilling to think of better things, and refuse to hear the call, "Rise and come away." Sickness and death invade the dwelling, a darling child blighted in bud, or husband or wife dies in vigour of life, yet in vain. The sails of commerce rent; business blighted, schemes frustrated, and property wasted, to destroy the nest. God admonishes by knocking the world from under them, and places them in altitude to look for a better. "Arise, this is not your rest." 2. God uses *Divine allurements*. The eagle "fluttereth over her young," "hovers over them, and excites them to imitate her, and take their flight."—*Cruden*. Thus the Lord moved Israel to leave Egypt, and thus speaks of their restoration from Babylon, and their conversion to Christ. "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness" (Hos. ii. 14, 15). He declares unwillingness that any should perish, reveals anxiety, and more than parental love for our salvation. Like the eagle rising to the sun, the Lord Jesus teaches us to rise to a better, brighter world. Enough in the Gospel to woo from sin and the world. Can you find a better portion than God and heaven?

Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,  
Thy better portion trace,  
Rise from transitory things  
Towards heaven, thy destined place.

3. God assures of *Divine assistance*. "When the eagle sees its young weary or fearful, it takes them upon its back and carries them."—*Cruden*. God "bare

Israel on eagle's wings, and brought them unto himself" (Ex. xix. 4). So strength is made perfect in weakness; God upholds and makes grace sufficient. But as the eagle "rejects as unnatural" its young that do not fix their eyes upon the bright orb of day, and rise, so God may swear "they shall not enter into my rest." 4. God promises Divine *protection*. The eagle bears its young on its wings for protection as well as aid. The archer must first penetrate the body of the old bird before he can touch the young. Naturally it is more out of danger than other birds when in its proper element; security is doubled when on its mother's wings. Difficult to kill an eagle. If down on earth, with its head on turf, and longer at fountains, then a noble mark and easy prey. Just as the heaven-born soul, if in his proper place, and after his proper object, is out of reach of the wicked—above the world, with its pomps and vanities, which fade away in the distance—fiery darts of Satan must penetrate Jehovah's wings before they touch him. "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." We see, then, why God disturbs with the ills of life that we may obey his call. He sends winds and rain, takes away the warm down of earthly comforts, and pulls down our tabernacles, that we may leave to dwell in mansions above.—*Rev. William Jackson*.

### GOD'S WORK OF GRACE IN THE REDEMPTION OF MAN.—*Verses 10-12.*

**I. The Condition of the Sinner.** Set forth in expressive terms. 1. In a *distant* state. If *found* he must be lost. Lost to God, of no service to him; to self, missing the great end of life; to others, of no benefit, but injurious. 2. In a *barren* state—"a desert place." The world, the unregenerate soul, a moral waste, sterile without God. 3. In a *dangerous* state. "Howling wilderness," great, terrible, and filled with "fiery serpents" (Deut. viii. 15; Jer. ii. 6). Howling with the roar of beasts and the blasts of tempest. 4. In a *hopeless* state. Away from the camp and company of God. Without a star in heaven or a footprint on earth. Fit emblem of the wretched, unregenerate condition of the sinner.

**II. The Method of Deliverance.** Strikingly illustrative of God's method of redeeming men. 1. *God seeks*. "He *found* him." He seeks *discovers* men in departure and sin. "Adam, where art thou?" His people are "sought out" (Is. lxii. 12). "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." 2. *God guides*. "He led him." When he seeks he is sure to find, bring to himself, guide through life and duty to heaven. "I did know (care for thee and love) thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought" (Hos. xiii. 5.)

**III. The Place of Destination.** "A land flowing with milk and honey," "the city of habitation." No home, no rest nor shelter in the wilderness. A country prepared and in reserve. God brings the believer into a large and wealthy place of highest hopes and joys—a place where unpropitious circumstances yield unexpected blessings. But heaven the fulfilment, the perfection of all.

From verses 11, 12 learn—

**I. Needful disturbance.** "As an eagle stirreth up her nest." 1. As to our outward condition in the world. 2. As to our selfrighteous confidence. 3. As to our departure from life.

**II. Divine example.** "Fluttereth over her young" to exite and teach them by example. The eye does more than the ear. God must be seen by example



of parents, teachers and ministers. God in Christ, humanised example. Render religion attractive that men may *see* it.

And as the bird each fond endearment tries  
To tempt her new-fledged offspring to the skies ;  
Employ each art, reprove each dull delay,  
Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.

**III. All sufficient assistance.** "Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings." This to aid and secure them. Not always aware of her design, away she sails with them and shakes them off her wings. She follows after, hovers near them, and when their pinions flag and they cannot fly, she darts and places herself under them, prevents their fall, succours their weakness and refreshes them for another flight. Our dependence is entire, but "our sufficiency is of God."

**IV. God's sole agency.** "So the *Lord* alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." God conforms himself to our modes of apprehension and expression. This necessary, but not degrading. He speaks unto us as unto children, with whom imitation is everything ; and levies a tax upon the world of nature to furnish images of himself. He assumes relation of parents, the affection of a father, the tenderness of a mother. He borrows images from animals, and especially the feathered tribes. "As a hen gathereth her chickens." Observe a divine agency—the *Lord* led him. See also exclusive application of this work. "The *Lord* alone did lead him." A resemblance of the manner in which it was done. "So the *Lord*, etc." How? "As an eagle stirreth up, etc." Three things here ascribed to the mother eagle, not in providing for her young, but in educating them—in teaching them to fly she stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth her wings, taketh them and beareth them on her wings. This applicable to God in dealing with us, and preparing as to seek things above.—(*Condensed from Jay.*)

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 8, 9. *The most high divided nations.* 1. *God* originally divided nations their inheritance. 2. *Divine purpose* is revealed in this division. 3. Israel was discovered and distinguished from all other nations. A nation, the depository of God's will, from which the Church and the Christ were to spring. Recognise a brother in every human being, for "God has made of one blood all nations upon the face of the earth." In the worst of times God has preserved a few for himself.

Ver. 9. *The Lord's portion.* His purchase. 2. His conquest. 3. His glory. 4. His heirs. *The value God sets upon His people.* As bought by blood, regenerated by grace, and designed for heaven. "What an astonishing saying. As holy souls take *God* for their *portion*, so God takes *them* for His *portion*."

They are infinitely happy in and satisfied with God ; He represents Himself as happy in them. This is what is implied on being a *saint*. He who seeks an earthly portion has little commerce with the Most High.—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 10. I. The primary application of the text as a summary of all that had been suffered by the Israelites, and all that had been done by God on their behalf. II. The peculiar manner in which it adapts itself to our own times and to our own cases. 1. We have the picture of the believer in his natural state, in a desert land. 2. In his regenerate state, found of God, and instructed. 3. In his guarded state. "Kept."—*Hy. Melvill.*

Ver. 11. *The method of Divine training.* I. Its object. To secure

development of our own powers, by action wise, divinely prompted, self-reliant, and adapted to constitution and circumstances. II. The means. Gentle, affectionate, stimulating, and exemplary. "The purpose of life is

development; the process of development is discipline; the result of discipline is a full and many-sided manhood."

For human weal, Heaven husbands all events.

### ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE, APOSTACY AND PUNISHMENT.—Verses 15-25.

Israel requited God for benefits, by forsaking him, and serving worthless idols. God is offended by their conduct and resolves to punish.

**I. Base Ingratitude to God.** "Do ye thus requite the Lord?" The heathens deemed ingratitude a sin so great as to include every other. Lycurgus asked why his laws did not notice it, replied, "I have left it to the gods to punish."

1. *Ingratitude displayed in self-indulgence.* "Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick." 2. *Ingratitude begetting pride.* "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled and their hearts were exalted, therefore have they forgotten me" (Hos. xiii. 6). 3. *Ingratitude ending in rebellion.* "Waxed fat and kicked." Like pampered and well-fed cattle they grew insolent, became wanton and ungovernable. "They were disobedient and rebelled against Thee and cast Thy law behind their backs" (Neh. ix. 25).

**II. Shameful Apostacy from God.** "Then he forsook God who made him." Departure from God a tendency in fallen nature. But the sin is aggravated by light, privileges and advantages of instruction. 1. *Forsaking God who made them.* No regard to our Creator, no thought for the end of our being. How deplorable to ignore our maker—source of intelligence and joy—"in whom we live and move and have our being." 2. *Sacrificing to gods which cannot help them.* Gods which were strange, new and vanities—Gods whom their fathers feared not and to whom they owed no obligation whatever—Gods termed "abominations" and "devils," repulsive in their nature and destructive in their influence. 3. *Exciting to jealousy God who loved them.* "They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods." "This jealousy," says Calvin, "rests upon sacred and spiritual marriage tie, by which God had bound the people to Himself."

**III. Terrible punishment from God.** God will severely visit his people for their apostacy. "The Lord saw it," abhorred and resolved to reject Israel. This punishment is set forth in the form of righteous judgment—Retribution not always *adequate*, nor *invariable*, but real and manifest—an instinct of justice in the divine nature, a law of providence and of conscience. "Be sure your sin will find you out." 1. *They had offended God and other nations should offend them.* "A foolish nation" would provoke them to anger (ver. 21). A people whom they deemed foolish, or who really were foolish though they thought themselves wise, would eventually be received against their wish. 2. *They had provoked God, and God would provoke them to jealousy.* Gentile nations, whom they despised, not only conquered them and became their masters, but entered a covenant from which they were excluded (*cf.* Matt. xxi. 43; Rom. x. 19). 3. *They had rejected God, and God would reject them.* "I will hide my face from them" (ver. 20). God would withdraw his favour and transfer it to a despised nation. As they had turned their back upon him he would turn his back upon them (*cf.* Jer. xviii. 17; ii. 27). They thought lightly of God, forsook him and then made substitutes for him. A picture of sin's progress, the sinner's folly and the way to righteous judgment.

DIVINE ANGER.—*Verses 19-27.*

These may be figurative expressions, but cannot be explained away, to make the Supreme Being incapable of feeling against sin and the sinner, destitute of pleasure or displeasure, without concern for His glory, or the welfare of the universe.

**I. The anger of God is caused by the sins of men.** "They have provoked me to anger." It exists in Divine perfections, and is manifest in Divine government. God's eye is a flame of fire, and its lofty jealousy rests upon every form of sin, negative and positive. "For the wrath of God is revealed (displayed in judicial vengeance) against all ungodliness (impiety, non-recognition of God) and unrighteousness (deviations from truth and moral rectitude) of men" (Rom. i. 18).

**II. Execution of anger is reserved to God Himself.** "I will provoke," "I will move," agent's secondary causes. God is the avenger. We are not to usurp His place, and recompense evil for evil. He knows how to punish without passion, and without injustice. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

**III. Anger, when roused in God, is terrible in its effects.** Most severe judgments are threatened (vers. 22-25). 1. *Judgments extensive in operation.* Sweeping the earth, penetrating the lowest hell, and like a fire of universal conflagration. 2. *Judgments irresistible in might.* "Set on fire the foundations of mountains." Strong fortresses subverted, holy cities destroyed, and the Jewish Constitution overturned. "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? Even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath," *i.e.*, equal to all that a man can fear from it (Ps. xc. 11). 3. *Judgments destructive in results.* Swept together, heaped up, and falling upon young men and maidens, children and old men—swift as arrows, and hot as fire; in the field and in the home destruction came. It falls upon men like wild beasts upon victims—to crush, destroy, and carry in triumph. This is not an overdrawn picture of the danger and the anger of God against presumptuous sins. "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver"—

For guilt, no plea! to pain, no pause, no bound!  
Inexorable all! and all extreme.

—Young.

**IV. The anger of God is often restrained by mercy.** "Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy" (ver. 27). God can make a full end, but desires not the death of sinners. In the midst of wrath He remembers mercy. 1. *Restraint in regard for His own honour.* "Lest their adversaries should say, 'Our hand is high,'" etc. If God destroyed Israel, the enemy would take the credit to themselves—become proud and boastful. Hence He regards His own name; will not permit its profanation and pollution (*cf.* Ex. xxxii. 12; Numb. xiv. 13; Isa. x. 5). 2. *Restraint in the interests of His people.* Unworthy as they are, "a nation void of counsel," He was concerned for their welfare. (a) For their *protection*. Their adversaries would injure them, behave themselves strangely; but He defends, restrains the wrath of man, and causes remainder to praise Him. (b) For their *correction*. He desires to teach and make them wise (ver. 28). "My people is foolish; they have not known Me." (c) For their *continuance* (ver. 26). No desire to blot out their name, but to perpetuate their existence, honour, and bless them for ever.



THE DANGERS OF PROSPERITY.—*Verses 15-18.*

Consider I. How men are affected by abundant prosperity in their social capacity, and with respect to their general worldly interests. History is full of instances to show how national character has deteriorated as the wealth and power of a nation have increased. II. How our churches are affected by such prosperity. Note the various religious errors of the century; antinomianism, &c. Note also the pride of enlightenment, which is the besetting temptation of the present day. III. How the injurious tendencies of long good fortune may be corrected. Let us: 1. Constantly recollect with gratitude the source and giver of our prosperity; 2. Use our resources and advantages as God intends they should be used; 3. Not desire prosperity for itself.—*A. Thomson, M.A.*

Another outline may be given.

**I. Prosperity is not real happiness.** *Nature* knows nothing of moral distinctions; treats all alike. But distinguished rank, long life, abundant wealth and ripe scholarship, do not satisfy inward craving. A millionaire may be miserable. "Prosperity is like salt water, the more you drink of it the thirstier you are" (*Talmage*).

**II. Prosperity profits very little** The wealth of empires cannot add to stature of body or mind, nor secure health and virtue. It is insecure and exposes to envy. "Envious at the prosperity of the wicked." Earthly possessions—vanity—do not fill, protect nor continue.

**III. Prosperity is spiritually dangerous.** "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them," (Prov. i. 32.) 1. *In leading to self-dependence.* 2. *In begetting contempt for God.* "Lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." 3. *In causing apostacy for God.* "Then he forsook God." Guard against selfishness. Be watchful and humble. "In all time of our wealth, good Lord deliver us."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 15. *Jeshurun*. A dishonoured name given to Israel several times (ch. xxxi. 16, xxxiii. 5, 26), meaning *upright, righteous*; a term also of endearment and indicating close relation to God. 1. *They forsook God*, who is just and right and had chosen them to walk in righteousness (Is. lxiv. 2.) "By placing the name of *righteous* before Israel, he censured ironically those who had fallen away from righteousness, and by thus reminding them with that dignity they had been endowed, he upbraided them with the more severity for their guilt of perfidy."—(*Calvin*). 2. *They degraded themselves*. Forsook the ways and the God of their fathers, became corrupt in manners, unworthy of confidence, and abominable in conduct. "A rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord." (Is. xxx. 9.) *Waxed fat and*

*kicked*. "The figure is admirably supported, through the whole verse. We see *first*, a miserable, lean steed, taken under the care and into the keeping of a master, who provides him with an abundance of provender. We see *secondly*, this horse waxing *fat* under this keeping. We see him *thirdly*, *breaking away* from his master, leaving his rich pasturage, and running to the wilderness, unwilling to bear the yoke or harness, or to make any returns for his master's care and attention. We see *fourthly*, whence this conduct proceeds, from a want of consciousness that his strength depends upon his master's keeping, and a lack of consideration that leanness and wretchedness must be the consequence of leaving his master's service and running off from his master's pasturage. How easy to apply these points to the

Israelites ! and how illustrative of their former and latter state ! and how powerfully do they apply to many called Christians, who having increased in riches, forget that God, from whose hand alone those mercies flowed."—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 17. *Not to God.* 1. Man, a religious being, will worship, must have a God. "If there be no God, we must invent one," cried a leader in the French revolution. 2. Right conception of God restrains, elevates, and preserves. 3. When God is cast off, abominable wickedness and awful degradation ensues. Things that are no *Gods, devils* chosen as substitutes. "Saying to a stock, 'Thou art my father ; and to a stone, 'Thou hast brought me forth.'" (Jer. ii. 26.)

Ver. 18. *Unmindful.* 1. Men outwardly prosperous, but spiritually destitute. 2. Men enjoying every favour, but acknowledging no obligation to God. 3. An offence most unnatural, unreasonable, and provoking. "Thou hast forgotten the rock of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength." (Is. xvii. 10.) "My people have forgotten me days without number." (Jer. ii. 32.)

Ver. 19. *Lord saw.* Divine inspection of Human Life. 1. God remembers the sins of men. Remembrance minute, constant and universal. 2. Men think God is indifferent to their sins. Forget him in thought and disregard him in conduct. 3. When men disregard God in their ways, they become more sinful in their lives. Proud and corrupt, false and unjust, "children that are corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord," Is. i. 4.

"For want of faith,  
Down the steep precipice of wrong he slides,  
There's nothing to support him in the right."  
—*Young.*

Vers. 21-22. *Mine anger.* 1. An element of wrath in Divine Government. 2. This wrath may overtake

men suddenly. 3. When it does overtake men they cannot escape. "When a great ransom cannot deliver thee."

Vers. 23-25. *God's arrows.* Judgments from the gods represented by arrows in Scripture and heathen writers. Apollo is pictured as bearing a bow and quiver full of *deadly arrows*, and in answer to prayer coming to smite the Greeks with *pestilence* (Hom. Il. I. v. 43). 1. *Innumerable in variety.* Famine, pestilence, wild beasts, poisonous reptiles, and war. 2. *Direct in their aim.* Never fall on wrong persons, never miss the mark. 3. *Deadly in their effect.* Wounds of poisoned arrows intensely painful and internal. No greater suffering than arrows "sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies," (Ps. xlv. 5). "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit (destroying vital energy, certain death)" (Job vi. 4).

Vers. 26-27. *Influence of Man's conduct on the Divine Mind.* If God sees, he must, speaking after the manner of man, feel and act. I. *Man's sin rouses Divine opposition.* God's anger not a passion but a principle, not against existence but against the sins and sufferings of existence. Opposition, hatred and sin revealed in judgment upon individuals and communities. II. *Man's sin restrains Divine procedure.* Jealousy indicates love. "The wrath of God," says Meyer, "is the holy love of God (who is neither neutral nor one-sided in his affection) for all that is good in its energy is antagonistic to all that is evil." "The expression the *wrath of God* simply embodies this truth that the relations of God's love to the world are unsatisfied, unfulfilled. The expression is not merely anthropopathic, it is an appropriate description of the Divine pathos necessarily involved in the conception of a revelation of love, restrained, hindered and stayed through unrighteousness" (*Martensen's Christian Dog.*) 1. If not loved and obeyed he feels wronged,

therefore does not show mercy. 2. If wronged or insulted he does not revenge himself, lest the enemy should rejoice, his people be destroyed, and his glory tarnished. Let the righteous

hope, the wicked tremble, for Divine wrath is only *partially* poured out in this world. It will be perfectly displayed in the final judgment.

MARKS OF WISDOM.—*Verses 28-30.*

God complains of Israel's folly. If they had been more considerate, wiser, they would have foreseen and avoided evil. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."

**I. Wisdom gives understanding in the events of life.** Wise men value and improve life. Their wisdom is not intuitional, abstract, and speculative. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding" (Job xxxii. 8). Hence it is sound and practical; fixed on a right end (Phil. iii. 13), and regulated by right principle (Ps. cxix. 105). The prudent man regards the events of life, discerns the signs of the times, learns coming judgments from the Word of God, and prepares to meet them. It is reckless folly to walk blindly, carelessly, in the midst of greatest evils. "Men that had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. xii. 32).

**II. Wisdom is superior to natural strength in the conflicts of life.** "One chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight" (ver. 30). A few taught by God are "mightier than they in arms." As Gideon (Judges vii. 22) and David's worthies (2 Sam. xxiii. 8). "Knowledge is power" is Bacon's famous aphorism. Physical and mechanical forces increase the power of man. Intellect wisely applied gives moral ascendancy. But "a wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength" (Prov. xxiv. 5); by faith and dependence upon God "puts to flight the armies of the aliens." "The battle is not to the strong." "Wisdom is better than strength." "Athanasius against the world!" "Wisdom is better than weapons of war" (Eccles. ix. 18).

**III. Wisdom leads to consideration of the end of life.** "That they would consider their latter end" (ver. 29). *We* know not the end, but it will come. To each, time will close. The *last* day, the most solemn of all, fast approaches. Instinct leads animals to prepare for the future. Worldly wisdom urges readiness for emergency. God loudly speaks in Providence, and warns in Scripture. "O that they were wise." "Oh, that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways" (Ps. lxxxi. 13).

Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer;  
Next day the fatal precedent will plead;  
Thus on, till wisdom is pushed out of life.  
—Young.

GOD'S REPROOF OF HUMAN FOLLY.—*Verses 28, 29.*

**I. As a fact men are extremely foolish.** Sinners are shortsighted, regardless of the inevitable consequences of their conduct. 1. *They are wilfully ignorant.* "That they understood." We are naturally ignorant, limited in thought and being; but not forced to err and sin. Ignorance may be removed by Scripture and the Holy Spirit. But the careless worldling, immersed in pleasure and playing with trifles, is a man without understanding, and like the beasts that perish. Wilful ignorance is the centre of all evil and the precursor of ruin. "Fools die for want of wisdom" (Prov. x. 21). 2. *They are strangely conceited.* Trust to reason; resist Divine teaching because authoritative and practical and would be their own guides. "Vain man (empty and ignorant) would be wise"



(Job xi. 12), forgets that all knowledge is disjointed, partial, and worthless, without the fear of God. Sages of antiquity "professing themselves wise became fools" (Rom. i. 22). "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (Prov. xxvi. 12). 3. *They are habitually indifferent.* Accustomed to sin, deaf to the voice of God; nothing stirs or restrains. Rooted habit has become ruling principle. The heart not kept, thoughts not rightly centered, control is lost over actions. "O that they would consider!"

**II. God seeks to make foolish men wise.** He does not compel, but reproves, expostulates. Wisdom in its very nature cannot be given by force. "Wisdom is the principle thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding." 1. *By striking providences.* Such mentioned here (vers. 24, 25). Affliction and misfortune, inward darkness, distress, and insanity. Providences which alarm and make us think. Providences which create joy and gratitude. all overruled for good and designed to instruct. 2. *By inspired teaching.* The Bible, an inspired guide, declares the providence and justice of God. A teacher unerring, free, and common to all. "Written for our learning," and recording events which are warnings. "All these things happened unto them for examples (types), and they are written for our admonition, &c." (1 Cor. x. 11). "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!"

#### THE CONSIDERATION OF DEATH.—*Verse 29.*

**I. Take account of the general insensibility of men to the grand fact that they are mortal.** Note: 1. How little effect the fact that whole races are dead since the beginning of time till now has upon us. 2. How seldom we are struck with the reflection that many things and small things too might cause our death. 3. How soon a recovery from danger sets aside the serious thought of death. 4. How schemes are formed for a long future time, without any thought of possible death. **II. See what can be brought in explanation of this.** 1. The insertion in the human mind, by the Creator of a principle counteractive in some degree to the influence of this prospect of death. 2. The fearful, radical depravity of our nature. 3. The perfect distinctness of life and death. 4. Even the certainty and universality of death. 5. Our utter inability to form any defined idea of the manner of existence after death. 6. A general presumption of having long to live. 7. The endeavours of men, by occupying their whole thoughts with other things, to preclude a thought of their end. **III. Briefly remonstrate against it.** To end our life is the mightiest event that awaits us in this world, and it is that which we are living but to come to. To have been thoughtless of it, then, will ultimately be an immense calamity. (*John Foster*).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 28, 29. *The Folly of Men.*

**I. Men are not wise.** 1. They prefer shadows to substance, worldly happiness. "What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue" (*Burke*). 2. They avoid not danger when before them. 3. Admit facts, yet live as if they were not facts. **II. God's provision to make men wise.** Life the school of God, who provides teachers and gives lessons. 1. In tender appeal. 2. In wonderful events. In patience, perseverance and affection, "who teaches like him?"

**Ver. 29. Latter End.** End of certain actions, end of sin, end of life generally considered not. "What will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. v. 31). "She remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully (in a startling, singular way)" (Lam. i. 9).

"Heaven gives the needful, but neglected call,

What day, what hour, but knocks at human hearts,

To wake the soul to sense of future scenes."

GOD A ROCK OF CONFIDENCE.—*Verse 31.*

The gods of the heathen not wise, powerful and gracious, like Jehovah. Enemies and friends can prove that He alone is worthy of confidence.

**I. Men chose a rock in whom to have confidence.** Wealth, the world and our fellow-creatures. Friends lack sympathy, prove unfaithful and pass away, confidences vain and false, abound and disappoint. Broken reeds which fail, pierce and wound the hand that leans upon them (Is. xxxvi. 6).

**II. God alone is worthy of confidence.** A rock the most abiding and unchanging object in nature. God the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. None like him proved. 1. By testimony of friends. Who enjoy shelter, comfort and rest. "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord?" "Not any rock like our God" (1 Sam. ii. 2). 2. By the testimony of enemies. "Our enemies themselves being judges." Compelled by dear experience to acknowledge God's power and supremacy. Egyptians (Ex. xiv. 25), Balak and Balaam (Num. xxiii.), Philistines (1 Sam. iv. 8). "O, Galilean, thou hast conquered!" was the forced confession of the Emperor.

**III. God as a rock of confidence should be recommended to others** Accessible to all; no steep rugged height to climb to reach it—a fit shelter from the wind and covert from the tempest (Is. xxxii. 2). Millions have sheltered and yet room. Blessedness beyond description to those who flee and find. "Blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted" (Ps. xviii. xxxi., 46; Is. xvii. 10).

DEMORALIZATION OF MEN.—*Verses 32, 33.*

**I. In falling short of the end of Existence.** Israel well-pleasing to God at first, a noble vine became a degenerate plant (Isa. v. 2-7; Jer. ii. 21). Like the vine of Sodom emblems of utter depravity (Isa. i. 10; Jer. xxiii. 14). Not merely frail, but morally corrupted, degraded; unprofitable and unable to answer the end of existence; not living "to the praise of his glory," but for selfish, useless ends. Sin is degradation of character, perversion of life's purpose. Other creatures fulfil their mission. All God's works praise him. But all men "have sinned" (Jew and Gentile, best and worst) and come short of (failed to attain to, disqualified for) the glory of God (Rom. i. 23).

**II. In becoming pernicious in life.** These terms most expressive, indicative of principles and practices most abominable. 1. *Offensive in character.* "Grapes of gall;" worse than wild grapes, bitter and vexatious to God and man. 2. *Mischievous in conduct.* "Poison of dragons," secreted malice, ready to dart forth upon others. "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent (to sting); adder's poison (most destructive) is under their lips" (Ps. cxl. 3; cf. Ps. lviii. 4; Rom. iii. 13). 3. *Fatal in influence.* *Asps* a species of snake whose bite is immediately fatal. "Nothing could be imagined worse or more to be abhorred than that nation" (Calvin). But this wickedness ripens for judgment. The thought of Sodom's destruction is suggested. Those who imitate Sodom bring forth the worst fruits of impiety, and will perish like Sodom. When great cities sink and great nations morally degenerate, they are doomed to judgments, righteous and complete overthrow. "Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample (not an exception to the regular land of the Divine Government) unto those that after should live ungodly," (2 Pet. ii. 6.)

GOD'S SUPREMACY IN THE WORLD.—*Verses 34-43.*

God is represented as killing and making alive (ver. 39); as judging men and punishing gods; as swearing to heaven and calling upon nations to rejoice in His supremacy.

**I. Supremacy asserted in the Physical World.** God is not quiescent but active in the world, "doing marvellous things without number." 1. *In appointing agents to maintain it.* All creatures under His command, mightiest and meanest; gods and men; the "glittering sword" and "arrows drunk with blood;" life and death. He arranges and directs all agencies to work in the circumstances, bodies and souls of men; in the departments of creation and the history of nations. 2. *In fixing times to display it.* Days of calamity and of joy. In "the wheel of nature" (Jas. iii. 6), in the revolutions of time, "to every thing there is a season." The world not ruled by chance, fate, or accident. Events most casual under control. Every work its part, and "a time to every purpose under heaven." "He changeth the times and the seasons." "God hath determined the times appointed" (Acts xvii. 26).

**II. Supremacy vindicated in the Moral World.** In the physical world law' abstract principles set up in opposition: in the moral, reason, heathen gods, "humanity," and the heavenly bodies. "The heavens do rule"—1. *In the experience of men.* Nebuchadnezzar's royal testimony, Belshazzar's judgment, and Napoleon's downfall. Man is subject to law as well as creation. "In whose hand is the soul (life) of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind (flesh of man)," Job. xii. 10. 2. *In the customs of society.* Social and religious—society is barbarous or civilised, progressive or stationary, degraded or elevated, as it recognises and depends upon God. 3. *In the history of nations.* God the Supreme Ruler and Proprietor. Nations increase as Rome, Israel, England, and America; or decay as Israel for its idolatry, Rome for its luxury, Spain for its persecutions—according to His purpose. The rise, growth, and ruin of nations with Him. "He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them: He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again" (Job xii. 23).

**III. Supremacy in its influence in the world.** Two effects chiefly. 1. *A source of joy to God's people.* "Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people" (ver. 43). His rule is not lawless authority, tyrannical and evil, but just and benevolent. Hence "the Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." 2. *A source of terror to his enemies.* "Render vengeance to his enemies" (ver. 43). When He "wounds" by loss (ver. 39); strikes according to the manner in which He swears (ver. 40); and becomes the archer and the arrow, who can resist? "Say to the righteous—it shall be well with him. Woe unto the wicked, etc." (Is. iii. 10, 11).

VENGEANCE IN STORE.—*Verses 34-38.*

"*This*" (ver. 34) not only includes the sins of the nation, but also the judgment of God. The apostacy of Israel, as well as the consequent punishment, is laid up with God—sealed up in His treasures; therefore they have not yet actually occurred—an evident proof that we have prophecy before us, and not the description of an apostacy that had already taken place, and of punishment inflicted in consequence (*Keil*).



**I. In store, as a natural consequence of a sinful course.** Natural for sin to produce results—results destroyed, checked, or treasured up. Sins stored up in human conscience (Ps. li. 3) God's providence, and at day of judgment, (Rom. ii. 5). None lost or left unpunished—all repaid. "Dost thou not watch over my sin (to visit it)? My transgression is sealed up in a bag (as evidence preserved against me); and thou sewest up mine iniquity (to keep it carefully and punish it justly)," Job. xiv. 16. "The iniquity of Ephraim is *bound up*; his sin is hid." (Hos. xiii. 12).

**II. In store, to be revealed in due time.** Justice pledged to avenge broken law upon disobedient. Time and manner may be sealed up. Long suffering must not be taken for forgetfulness. "Recompense in due time." Retribution. 1. *Terrible.* "Kill," and none can make alive. 2. *Near.* "At hand." Instruments of judgment, like weapons of war, are "taken in hand." 3. *Swift.* "The things make haste." Judgment lingereth not (2 Pet. ii. 3). 4. *Certain.* "Shall come." "I will render vengeance." As surely as I live for ever.

**III. The revelation of stored up vengeance will be just and wise.** "True and righteous are His judgments." Restrained and educational; yet sufficient. 1. *To convince God's people of their folly.* In forsaking Him for idols which are vain and impotent—in relying upon earthly props which are destroyed—in showing Himself to be the arbiter of life and death. 2. *To warn the wicked of their sin.* "Reward them that hate me." No power can avert or escape His anger. They may think themselves to be immovably fixed, but "their foot shall slide." They shall totter and fall. Refuge, strength, and hope shall fail them. In God only can these be found. "The Eternal God is thy refuge." Flee to Him.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 31. *God a rock.* A contrast between God and idols—in existence, attributes, and conduct.

Ver. 35. *Sliding feet.* Risks of carnal security. 1. Men fix themselves firmly, feel secure, and think nothing can shake them. 2. This is tremendous risk. Contempt for misfortune of others first sign of insecurity (Job xii. 5). Sin overbalances, providence shakes the feet, and the fall begins. 3. Results most sad. Imagine a slip into the abyss from alpine heights! "To slide and fall is in a thousand places certain destruction; and no threatenings against the workers of iniquity are more terrible than that they shall be set in slippery places, that their feet shall slide in due time" (*Dr. Thom. Ld. and Bk.*). 4. God alone can prevent sliding. "Hold thou me up," etc. (*cf.* Ps. xxxviii. 17; xciv. 18).

Vers. 35–36. 1. *A warning against self revenge.* "Avenge not yourselves,

but rather give place unto (the) wrath (let it spend itself and have free space; or give place, by stepping aside as a man attacked by a wild beast); vengeance is mine (Rom. xii. 19). 2. God has power to punish. "I will repay, saith the Lord." Put off indulgence, make room for the judgment of God, who will execute in due time.

"Anger is like  
A full hot horse; being allow'd his way,  
Self-mettle tires him."—*Shakespeare.*

Ver. 36. *The Lord shall judge.* Judicial acts of God. 1. As judge for His people in mercy. 2. As judge against or upon them to correct. 3. As judge of all men in righteousness.

Vers. 34, 35. *Iniquity reserved for future punishment.* 1. *Treasured up.* Noticed, not forgotten, never forgiven without repentance. 2. *Treasured up to be punished.* "Evil pursueth sinners." An order of sequence in moral as physical law. Punishment

fixed, certain and near. "Avenging deities are shod with wool," but never pause nor mitigate their judgments. 3. *Be wise and escape.* Fatally unwise to delay repentance and return to God!

Defer not till to-morrow to be wise,  
To-morrow's sun to thee may never rise.

Vers. 36-38. Learn—1. *Afflictions of God's people.* Their power gone, reduced to shame and helplessness. Gods whom they worshipped and supported despised and unable to defend them. 2. *The pity of God for His afflicted people.* Judge, i.e., plead their cause, protect and deliver them. Repent of evils brought against them, and deal in mercy, not in judgment, with them. 3. *Lessons to be learned from this experience.* The folly of forsaking God. The impotence of idols. The insecurity of any hiding place

against the justice of God. The design of mercy to awaken a sense of ingratitude and rebellion. "Experience is the best master." "Experience teaches fools; and he is a fool, indeed, that does not profit by it."

Ver. 39. Learn—1. God's self-existence. "I am He." 2. God's sole rule. "No God with me." 3. God as arbiter of life and death. "I kill and I make alive," etc. 4. God's absolute power. "Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."

Vers. 40-42. *A terrible God.* 1. Threatening vengeance. 2. Ratifying sentence with an oath. 3. Preparing to execute. 4. No resistance when vengeance comes! "The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies."

#### THE LAST DISCOURSE.—Verses 44-47.

These are the last words, the repetition of the law of Moses, the ultimatum to the people.

I. The subject of the discourse. "All the words of this law." Words of warning, promise and command. The law with its claims and authority. Religion represented by law. 1. *Its fulness.* "All the words" needed. Nothing kept back. Testimony clear and sufficient, enough to satisfy intellect and heart, to guide and bless. 2. *Its importance.* "Not a vain thing," an empty, worthless profession; a mere shadow of the good and true, but the highest and only good. The "one thing needful." 3. *Its necessity.* "Your life." Not a philosophy, a mere system of morality, but a power of spiritual life. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." "Christianity is not a theory or a speculation, but a life; not a philosophy of life, but a life and a living process."—(Coleridge). It is the highest life possible to men, an impartation of power by which eternal life may be finally attained.

II. The attention which the discourse requires. Attention and interest should be according to the importance of a thing. 1. *A fixed purpose of mind.* "Set your hearts." Heart and mind must be centered on it. Constant thought and application, a firm and earnest resolve. Through decision, not passing feelings and vacillating purpose. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Ps. cxii. 7). 2. *A due performance in life.* "Observe to do." Hear and practice. Business men say life means energy and work. Idleness and sloth are marks of death. Christ quickens, constrains and becomes the principle of action and obedience. When Christ lives within us, obedience is prompt and loyal. "Keep My commandments and live."

III. The blessings of thus heeding this discourse. If religion is the essence of wisdom possession must be advantageous. 1. *It gives enjoyment of life.* "Your life" in its joy, happiness and usefulness. Life—miserable existence without God. Noble and glorious the life of him who loves God and feels that

God loves him. 2. *It prolongs life.* "Prolong your days." If this promise does not really belong to us, yet religion tends to length of life, in preserving from sins which shorten it, in promoting health, cheerfulness and activity. "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." 3. *It prepares for eternal life.* Heaven not only eternal existence but eternal enjoyment. True religion an earnest and foretaste of it. More than dry formalism, cold assent, barren orthodoxy. It is essentially "the fountain of life," "the kingdom of God within."

#### THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDS.—Verses 46-47.

**I. Earnest purpose is essential to personal obedience to God's law.** "Set your hearts," etc. Without a purpose no strength in the will, no direction in effort. Power and activity valueless without a clear aim. To fix our hearts on one great end, to make thought and duty define position and relation to this centre principle are chief means of improvement, advance and obedience in life. "My heart, O God, is fixed (prepared, set up) my heart is fixed" (Ps. lvii. 7).

**II. Obedience to God's law will secure happiness and prosperity.** "It is not a vain thing for you." The life of individuals, the security and elevation of the nation. Obedience better than gigantic schemes of trade, and colonization than enlargement of frontier and increase of armies. "If thou wilt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments, which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth."

**III. It is our duty to render obedience ourselves and to teach our children.** "Ye shall command your children." Instruct by precept and personal example. Affection and divine law should urge to this. This will secure their interests here and welfare hereafter. Not mere talk, teaching to read, but practical training required in present day. "Train up (instruct, dedicate) a child in the way he should go" (Prov. xxii. 6).

#### THE LAST DAYS OF MOSES.

**I. The last days of Moses were marked by sublime self-forgetfulness, and deep solicitude for the well-being of the people.** When informed that the time of his departure was at hand, he exhibits no concern for himself, utters no regret because of his great privation, or anxiety as to future destiny. Sublimely he rises above personal and selfish considerations, and applies mind and heart in a last effort to promote good of the people. Asks Jehovah to appoint a successor in his great office (Num. xxvii. 15-22); solemnly recapitulates the law to the people (Deut. xxxi. 7, 8, 23); pours forth this lofty and solemn song (vers. 1-43); and blesses the several tribes (chap. xxxiii.).

**II. The last days of Moses were shadowed and saddened by sin.** Why die at this time? Why not permitted to complete his work by leading the people into the promised land? Not because physical strength exhausted or body worn out or diseased (chap. xxxiv. 7). Because he sinned against God (ver. 31, cf. Num. xx. 2-13). Sin imparted mournful interest to last days of Moses.

**III. The last days of Moses were relieved and cheered by the mercy of God.** God's kindness exhibited in three things. 1. In the aspect in which He represents his death to him. "Die . . . and be gathered unto thy people."



(1.) Death is not the end of our life. "Gathered," etc., not a poetical phrase for death; often used in addition to the record of death as a fact (*cf.* Gen. xxv. 8, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 33; Num. xx. 26). Nor does the expression relate to burial. In this sense not true of Moses, Aaron, or Abraham (*cf.* Gen. xv. 15; 1 Kings ii. 10; xi. 43). "The only assignable sense" says Alford, "is that of reference to a state of further personal existence beyond death." (2.) To the people of God death is the way to congenial social life. Moses about to pass neither into isolation nor uncongenial society of strangers, but to His own people—persons of kindred sympathies, purposes, and interests. 2. In reminding him of the death of Aaron. Moses witnessed the close of Aaron's course on Mount Hor. Recollection of that scene would tend to make his own death less formidable and more familiar. Aaron passed away peacefully; why should Moses dread the same journey? 3. In permitting him to see the promised land (ver. 52). Surely this sight, "one of the fairest and widest prospects in all the eastern lands," must have been a source of consolation and joy to the departing spirit of the man of God. Conclusion. 1. See the beauty and nobility of overlooking self in doing good to others; and imitate it. 2. See how one sin may cause grief and loss to a good man; and abstain from every form of evil. 3. See how in God's dealings with men mercy is mingled with judgment, and thankfully trust Him. 4. Our last days will come; by the grace of God let us endeavour so to live, that they be like those of Moses—godly, useful, and inspiring in their prospects.—*William Jones.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 46, 47. *True Religion.* 1. Not empty profession. 2. A life conformed to God's will. 3. Real enjoyment. "Religion is the dominion of the soul. It is the hope of life, the anchor of safety, the deliverance from evil" (*Napoleon I.*) *Duty and its Enforcement.* 1. What the duties? Personal religion and instruction of posterity. 2. What are the arguments to enforce it? *a.* Importance of the thing. "Your life." *b.* Advantage of it, &c.

The path of duty is the way to glory.  
—*Tennyson.*

Vers. 49, 50. *Moses on Mount Nebo, or a Minister's death scene.* This is the record of a striking death scene. It presents to us—I. The common destiny of our race, "Gathered unto thy people." This phrase denotes the twofold change which death effects in our condition. 1. The corporal; 2. The spiritual. II. The rigorosity of moral rule. The reason why Moses was required to die now, was because he had committed a sin at Meribah. III. The agency of God in man's dis-

solution. Moses died from the determination of the Divine mind. All existence depends upon God's will. IV. The termination of life in the midst of labour. V. The promptitude of Providence in supplying the place of the dead. This fact is—1. Encouraging to our faith; 2. Humbling to our pride. VI. The tears of a congregation over the grave of their minister. Well might they mourn (*cf.* chap. xxxiv. 8, 9).—*Adapted from Dr. Thomas.*

Ver. 51. *Trespassed.* 1. In strange unbelief. 2. In unrestrained passion. 3. In open rebellion. 4. In publicly dishonouring God. Learn the jealousy of God; the possibility of failure in qualities in which we excel. Never think you are secure; guard temper. Though God pardons sin, yet will He mark His hatred even in His servants. A small sin may be followed by great punishment.

Must I then forward only look for death?  
Backward I turn mine eye and find him  
there,  
—*Young.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 2. *Dew and rain.* It is the transformation of death unto life, and the raising of that which lives into higher and fairer form which is the end in view. The morning sun and the morning rain-cloud may seem wide apart in their purpose, may appear at times to obstruct each other, but they have one great aim. The sun and the rain come to the dying seed, and both together draw it from darkness to light and build it up into the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, that God's world may live and praise His name. Both are rich in times of refreshment ; the sun after the dark night, the rain after the parched day ; and after both, the flower raises its head, and the birds sing, and men are glad.—*J. Ker.*

Ver. 7. *Days of old.*

"The past lives o'er again  
In its effects, and to the guilty spirit  
The ever-frowning present is its image."  
*S. T. Coleridge.*

Ver. 10. *Apple of his eye.* Tender guardianship. This organ more watched than any other. "Does it not appear to thee," says Socrates to Xenophon, "to be a work of providence that, considering the weakness of the eye, He has protected it with eyelids, as with doors which, whenever there is occasion to use it, are opened, and are again closed on sleep ? And that it may not receive injury from the winds, He has planted on it eyelashes like a strainer ; and over the eyes has disposed the eyebrows, like a penthouse, so that the sweat from the head may do no mischief."

Ver. 15. *Fat.* The great bulk of mankind resemble the swine, which in harvest gather and fatten upon the acorns beneath the oak, but show to the tree which bore them no other thanks than rubbing off its bark, and tearing up the sod around it.—*Scriver.*

Vers. 23-26. *Mischiefs.* Every action becomes more certainly an eternal

mother than it is an eternal daughter. *Richter.* Vice ever carries with it the germ of its own ruin, and a retribution which is all the more inevitable from being often slow, awaits every violation of moral law.—*Farrar.*

Ver. 29. *Wise.* If you ask me which is the real hereditary sin of human nature, do you imagine I shall answer—pride or luxury, or ambition, or egotism ? No ; I shall say—*indolence.* He who conquers *indolence* will conquer almost everything.—*Lavater.*

Vers. 34-35. *In store.* Anne of Austria, Queen of France, once said to Cardinal Richelieu, her implacable enemy—"My Lord Cardinal, there is one fact which you seem entirely to have forgotten ; God is a sure paymaster. He may not pay at the end of every week, or month, or year ; but I charge you, remember that He pays in the end."

Ver. 39. *I kill.*

Make then, while yet ye may, your God  
your friend.

Vers. 46, 47. *Your life.* Faraday's "religion was a living root. His standard of duty was supernatural. It was not founded on any intuitive ideas of right and wrong, nor was it fashioned upon any outward expediences of time and place ; but it was formed entirely on what he held to be the revelation of the will of God in the written word ; and throughout all his life his faith led him to act up to the very letter of it."  
—*Memoir by Dr. Bruce Jones.*

Ver. 46. *Children.* John Eliot, on the day of his death, was found teaching an Indian child the alphabet as he lay on his bed ; and when one tried to persuade him to rest, he said—"I cannot preach now, but I have prayed God to keep me useful, and He has left me strength to teach a child."

Ver. 50. *Die.* Life's evening, we may rest assured, will take its character

from the day which has preceded it ; and if we would close our career in the comfort of religious hope, we must prepare for it by early and continuous religious habit.—*Shuttleworth*.

Ver. 52. *Not go*. The death of Moses, though it was to him an entrance into glory, was also a chastisement of his infidelity. How many noble proofs had he given of his courage and strength of faith ! How many gracious services had he done for his Master ? Yet, for one act of disobedience, he must be gathered to his fathers. All our obedience cannot bear out one sin against God. How vainly shall we hope to make amends to God for our former trespasses, by our better behaviour, when Moses hath this one sin laid in his dish, after so many and

worthy testimonies of his fidelity ! When we have forgotten our sins, God remembers them ; and although not in anger, yet He calls for our arrearages. (*Bp. Hall*.) *See the land*. It is the horizon that gives dignity to the foreground ; a picture without sky has no glory. This present, unless we see gleaming beyond it the eternal calm of the heavens above the tossing tree-tops with withering leaves, and the smoky chimnies, is a poor thing for our eyes to gaze at, or our hearts to love, or our hands to toil on. But when we see that all paths lead to heaven, and that our eternity is affected by our acts in time, then it is blessed to gaze ; it is possible to love the earthly shadows of the uncreated beauty—it is worth while to work.—*Maclaren*.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—Moses now performs the last great act of life and blesses the tribes of Israel. "The blessing opens with a solemn conclusion of the covenant and giving of the law at Sinai, by which the Lord became King of Israel, to indicate at the outset the source from which all blessings must flow to Israel (vers. 2-5). Then follow the separate blessings upon the different tribes" (vers. 6-25).—(*Keil*). Compare these blessings with those of Jacob (Gen. xxvii. 40-49 ; i. 27). Nothing special in the order.

**1-5. Introduction.** Man of God (*cf.* Josh. xiv. 6 ; 1 Sam. ix. 6 ; Ps. xc.—(*Heading*)). Ver. 2 describes the vast area over which God's glory shone in giving of law, from Sinai, Seir and Paran—in thunder, fire and heavenly retinue. **Saints**, *lit.*, from myriads of holiness, *i.e.*, holy angels (Zech. xiv. 5). **People**, *lit.*, peoples, *i.e.*, the Gentiles or the twelve tribes. **Saints**, God's people just spoken of or holy ones (ver. 2). **Thy hand**, change from third to second person, and *vice versa*, common in Hebrew poetry (*cf.* Ps. xlix. 19). **Hand**, His power. **He**, (ver. 5) God, not Moses (*Jesh. cf.* xxxii. 15).

**6. Reuben's blessing.** The rights of Reuben withheld in Jacob's blessing (Gen. xlix. 3) ; Moses prays for continuance and prosperity. Simeon is passed over, scattered abroad he lost individuality as a tribe, yet lived in the midst of the tribe of Judah and shared its general blessings. **Few**, *lit.*, a number, easily counted, a negative implied from preceding clause, "let not his men be few," *i.e.*, let them be many.—(*Gesenius*).

**7. Judah's blessing.** Royal tribe, from whom sceptre must not depart (Gen. xlix. 10). Judah was to lead in war, be brought back in safety and triumph. **Sufficient** to preserve independence.

**8-11. Blessings of Levi.** Addressed as petition. **Thum**, and **Urim**, *i.e.*, "thy Right and Thy Light," *cf.*, Ex. xxviii. 30). **Holy One**. Levi as head of tribe. **Prove**, two events mentioned, one at beginning, the other at end of forty years wandering, represent the series of trials to prove the faith of this chosen tribe. **Mas**. (Ex. xvii. 1-7). **Mar**. (Num. xx. 1-13). Said a reference to Ex. xxxii. 26-29 ; *cf.* Mat. x. 37 ; Luke xiv. 26. **Teach**. Ver. 10, dignity of priesthood conferred upon them, and to them belonged office of instructors. Hence favour needed and strength to smite the loins, *i.e.* the seat of power and foil the enemy.

**12. Benjamin's blessing.** A favourite with his father, was cared for by the Lord. **Dwell** in safety, resting upon him. **Cover**, shelter. **Shoulders**, on his sides or borders, figure from "fathers carrying their sons while young and tender."—(*Calvin*).<sup>1</sup> (*cf.* i. 31). "Upon the back," equivalent to "between shoulders" (1 Sam. xvii. 6).



**13-17. Blessing of Joseph** (including Ephraim and Manasseh). A resemblance, yet not a reproduction of that pronounced (Gen. xlix. 25, 26). In both fertility of districts allotted to them is a leading feature. **Deep** (ver. 13) springs of water. **Chief things** (ver. 15), best gifts **Mountains**, the sheltered sides of which were covered with vine, olive and fig, etc. **Fulness**, all good that earth could produce. **Good will**. Covenant blessings added to natural. **Bush**, a manifestation of God to Moses (Ex. iii.) **Separated**, consecrated, or distinguished (Gen. xlix. 26). In the strength of this blessing Joseph would be powerful and tread down nations. **Glory** (ver. 17). Render, "The firstborn of his (*i.e.* Joseph's) bullock is his glory." Reference to Ephraim raised by Jacob to honours of firstborn (Gen. xlviii. 8), and here likened to the firstling of Joseph's oxen, *i.e.*, of Joseph's offspring, the singular noun (*shor*) taken collectively.—(*Speak. Com.*) **Ox**, an emblem of power generally (Gen. xlix. 6; Ps. xxii. 12; Jer. xli. 20; **Unicorn**. Wild bull (*cf.*, Num. xxiii. 22; xxiv. 8). **Thousands** (*cf.* Gen. xlviii. 19). (1 Sam. xviii. 7, 8).

**18, 19. Blessings of Zebulun and Issachar**. Chiefly a repetition of Gen. xlix. 13-15. Going out in commercial enterprise. Zebulun dwelt on sea shore, Issachar possessed a fertile inland district, dwelt at home and prospered in agricultural pursuits. **Mountain**, of the Lord's inheritance (Ex. xv. 17), upon which the Lord was about to plant His people and build His sanctuary. They would offer thank offerings themselves and invite to sacrificial meals other nations.—(*Keil*.) **Righteousness** not merely legal sacrifices conforming to ritual, but those offered in right spirit, well-pleasing to God (Ps. iv. 6; li. 21.—(*Keil*)). **Suck**. The treasures of both sea (Mediterranean and sea of Galilee) and land shall be theirs; purple dye from the shell of the oyster and mirrors and glass vases from the sand.

**20, 21. Blessing of God**. **Enlargeth** by extending territory, or delivers from trouble, from attacks by hostile and surrounding tribes. **Lion** rests securely and fearlessly though surrounded by enemies. The verse indicative of warlike character. **First part** of conquest of Israel made by Gad and Reuben at request of Moses (*cf.* Num. xxxii.) **Portion**, the leader's portion reserved, *i.e.*, there was reserved the fitting portion for God as leader in war.—(*Speak. Com.*) **Heads**, *i.e.*, joined other leaders to fulfil God's commands respecting conquest of Canaan (Num. xxxii. 17, 21, 32; Josh. i. 14; iv. 12).

**22. Dan's blessing**. **Whelp**, a cub; differing from a young lion weaned and beginning to catch prey for itself. **Shall leap** after it has grown up. **Springs** suddenly upon its prey. **Bashan** abounding with cares. Dan's territory was insufficient; by a sudden and successful irruption northwards he established a colony.

**23. Naphtali's blessing**. **Satisfied**, his lot some of the most beautiful scenery and most fertile soil in Palestine (*cf.* *Porter's Handbook* of Syria). Fruits ripen earlier here than anywhere else.

**24, 25. Blessing of Asher**. **Acceptable**, let him be the favoured one of his brethren, *i.e.*, the favoured of God. The blessing an exposition of the name. **Asher**, the prosperous (*cf.* Gen. xxx. 15).—(*Keil*). **Dip**. The process of extracting oil by foot-presses; or allusion to fertile district adapted to culture of olive (Job xxix. 6; *cf.* Gen. xlix. 20). **Shoes**. This verse continues the figure of preceding, and represents strength and firmness of Asher, as is shod with iron and brass (*cf.* Rev. i. 15). Iron-soled shoes worn by warriors and suitable to rocky country. **Days**. "Thy strength shalt be continued to thee as long as thou shalt live: thou shalt never know feebleness and decay."—(*Speak. Com.*)

**26-29. Conclusion**. "God's glory and power, and consequent safety and prosperity of God's people, form the climax as they do the basis, of the blessing which the law-giver has to pronounce." None like unto God, O Jeshurun. **Rideth** with unlimited power in, *i.e.*, as thy helper. This God a refuge (ver. 27), dwelling place for protection to homeless wanderers (Ps. xc. 1; xci. 9; Hab. i. 12). **Underneath**, *i.e.*, God on earth below as well as in heaven above. **Fountain**, a designation of Israel, who came from Jacob as waters from a fountain (*cf.* Is. xlvi. 1; Ps. lxviii. 26). Ver. 29, unparalleled protection, deliverance and victory, hence Israel congratulated. **Happy! Saved**, not mere deliverance from danger and distress, but salvation in general (like Zech. ix. 9; *cf.* Is. xlv. 17), coming from Jehovah.

### THE FORMATION OF THE KINGDOM.—*Verses 1-5.*

The glory of the covenant, the elevation of Israel as a nation, and the majesty of the King and his law set forth.

**I. The revelation of the king**. God appears in forms awful and impressive.

**1. In streaming light**. "He shined forth"—like the rising sun, filling all

around, and tipping the mountains with splendour. God is light, illumines every valley, and covers all places with His presence and truth. 2. *In burning fire*. "Went a fiery law." "The Lord descended in fire." "Is not My word like a fire?" (Jer. xxix. 22). 3. *In terrible thunder*. "There were thunders and lightnings." God robes Himself in clouds of smoke or flames of fire to impress the senses and speak to the heart "Whose voice then shook the earth?" 4. *In splendid retinue*. "He came with ten thousands of saints." "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even many thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place" (Ps. lxxviii. 17). Thus did God reveal Himself to Israel. "Who is a God like unto Thee?" If mountains trembled, and Moses feared and quaked, how reverent and deeply touched should we be?

**II. The number of his subjects.** Jehovah is the universal King. His sway is over the meanest and mightiest. All agencies and all creatures are at His service. 1. *Myriads in heaven above*. "Angels, and authorities, and powers" are subject to Him (1 Pet. iii. 22). "Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him" (Dan. vii. 9, 10) as executors of justice or ministers of mercy. 2. *The inhabitants of the earth beneath* (ver. 3). Israel, the Gentiles, and all nations of the earth. "Saints," holy ones especially, stand in His presence, constitute His train, and enter His spiritual kingdom. Submission to Him essential to happiness and heaven.

**III. The assumption of Royalty.** These splendours of royal state illustrate the majesty of the king, and the method of establishing his kingdom. 1. *By enactment of law*. Law needful, and the medium of blessing in every kingdom. Order and supremacy only secured by good government. "Sovereign law sits empress, crowning good, repressing ill." "The law came by Moses," "was given by the disposition (ministration) of angels" (Acts vii. 53). 2. *By appointment of representatives*. "Moses commanded us a law," was God's viceregent, and a subordinate king. Moses was "the man of God," and the minister of God. Consecration to God's service gives real worth and dignity. True kings and priests those who trust and obey. No supremacy, no reigning without love to God and service to men. This should be our ambition. "I would rather be king over the *French* than king over France," said Louis XIV. 3. *By consent of the people*. Israel stood in attitude of reverence and attention. At His "feet," willing to hear and ready to obey. "All that the Lord shall say we will do." Our wills must be subdued and consent before we become subjects, disciples of Jesus. In vain do we profess or teach, if disobedient. "He that is of God heareth God's words."

### THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S LAW.

The giving of the law was the design of this manifestation. "Moses personates the listening nation, and not only speaks of himself in the third person, but does so by identifying his own person with the nation, because he wished the people to repeat his words from thorough conviction, and because the law which he gave in the name of the Lord was given to himself as well, and was as binding upon him as upon every other member of the congregation" (*Keil*).

**I. In the source from which it was revealed.** "From his right hand," &c. The law from God; a revelation of his mind and authority. Hence not mere counsel or advice, but given from a source which he cannot question; imposing obligations which are strongest, and enforced by sanctions which none can resist.

II. In the splendour in which it was revealed. This event, unparalleled in the history of man, no nation, whatever its legends or traditions, ever conceived of the God of heaven proclaiming law to them "out of the midst of fire"—light unapproachable hiding his person from the gaze of man. These outward signs of majesty, power and authority will not be witnessed again until the great day "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with the angels of His power in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

III. In the design for which it was revealed. Law designed to reveal the claims and preserve the knowledge of God among men; to convince of sin, offences against the order of society and the authority of the Creator; to enforce moral principles and educate to moral duty. Hence—1. *To enrich God's people.* "The inheritance of the congregation" (ver. 4). Good laws peculiar to Israel, and distinguished them from other nations (Ps. xiv. 7, 20; Rom. iii. 2), are the best wealth and treasure; the Scriptures and the means of grace a goodly heritage to any people. 2. *To bless all nations.* "This is the blessing" (ver. 1)—(a) In revealing God's love. "He loved the people" (ver. 3). (b) In transmitting God's will. Be thankful for this inheritance of law. Remember, obligation to keep it is hereditary, passing from parents to children. Receive it as a legacy of love and truth. "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever" (Ps. cxix. 111).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *The man of God.* 1. A special friend of God. "Speaking face to face, enjoying direct intercourse with God." 2. A distinguished servant, holding high position and engaged in glorious work. 3. A famous legislator, giving divine laws and requiring implicit obedience. 4. A medium of blessing to his people in life, example, and teaching.

Ver. 2. *A fiery law.* 1. In its bright origin. 2. In its searching nature. 3. In its purifying effects. 4. In its awful sanctions. *He shined forth.* God resting and journeying with his people as light, shield, and defence. *Sinai, Seir, and Patan.* Special providences in special places. Manifestation of God's presence, the gift of flesh, appointment of 70 elders and bestowment of Holy Spirit.

Ver. 3. 1. God's love to his people. 2. God's rule over his people. 3. God adored by his people. *In thy hand.* 1. To be formed into a people. 2. To be preserved as a people (John x. 2, 8). 3. To be ruled as a people. *At thy feet.* 1. The place of humility. 2. The

place of security. 3. The place of instruction, sitting like scholars to receive instruction and ready to obey. "Every one shall receive of thy words." *Yea, he loved the people.* No doubt of this with regard to Israel. Often reminded of it, and told *why* he set his love upon them. Not for greatness, they were the fewest of all; not for goodness, for they were stiff-necked; but because the Lord had a favour towards them. He chose, redeemed them, provided for them, and distinguished them by miracles and privileges. His love is of three kinds—A love of *benevolence*, which consists in wishing and designing them good. A love of *beneficence*, consisting in doing them good. This appears in a thousand instances, chiefly remembering them in their low estate, and sending his Son that they might live. A love of *complacency*. The love of benevolence and of beneficence regarded them as unworthy and miserable; the love of complacency regards them as mere creatures. He cannot take pleasure in those destitute of his image and enemies by wicked works. But he prepares them for delighting in



them and holding intercourse with them. What can I wish more? Do men reproach? I have been precious in his sight, honourable, and he has loved me. Let them curse, he will bless. One smile of God's is better

than life, and will more than balance a universe of frowns. Let my portion and the portion of mine be—"The goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush."—*Jay*.

#### REUBEN, OR THE BLESSING OF EXISTENCE.—*Verse 6.*

This is a prayer for the continued existence of Reuben and suggests things that imperilled this existence.

**I. Existence prolonged in danger.** Reuben was endangered by surrounding nations—their leaders were far in advance of them, and little ones left behind (Num. xxxii. 27; Jos. iv. 12). Individual and family life dependent upon God, exposed to risks. Need to pray for each as Abraham, "O that Ishmael might live before thee."

**II. Existence prolonged in sin.** Reuben had a threefold honour (Gen. xlix. 3), as first-born, might of Jacob's strength and naturally pre-eminent. He forfeited these blessings and fell into dishonour. He grievously transgressed (Gen. xlix. 3, 4) and rebelled with Korah (Num. xvi. 1). Sin brings disgrace, shortens life and exposes to judgment. "Preserve thou those that are appointed to die."

**III. Existence prolonged with prosperity.** "Let not his men be few." Judging from the first census after deliverance from Egypt and that on plains of Moab nearly forty years after, this tribe was reduced in number. The prayer includes continued existence, increase of number and perpetual remembrance. "The Lord shall increase you more and more." "I will increase them with men like a flock." Lessons from Reuben's history. Learn: 1. Not to insult the fallen and disgraced. 2. Not to perpetuate marks of wickedness. "To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it." 3. To take warning. Occupied with herds and flocks they lost early energy; could not be roused against Jabin (Judges v. 15, 16); dissipated strength in distant expeditions (*cf.* 1 Chron. v. 10-18), and did not care to complete their conquests (*cf.* Num. xxxii.)—(*cf. Speak. Com.*) 4. Pray for personal life, family increase and church prosperity, that all may be given to God.

#### JUDAH: THE BLESSING OF SUPREMACY.—*Verse 7.*

This reference is rich, peculiar, and suggestive. Judah, the royal tribe; the prayer for its settlement, security, and supremacy.

**I. Supremacy through conflict.** Judah, prominent in battle, in order of marching and encampment, hence danger, conflict, and suffering. All knowledge and virtue gained through difficulty and contest. The earth is subdued and sovereignty over men acquired by warfare. Supremacy ever through conflict.

**II. Supremacy by God's help in conflict.** "Be thou an help to him." God strengthened his hands, gave warriors sufficient to support the tribe and vindicate its rights. Without him no strength, no triumph. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help."

**III. This help in conflict secured by prayer.** "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah." Conscious of weakness, he *cried* to God. Prayer never out of place.

Greatest soldiers often devoutest men—Cromwell, Havelock, and Hedley Vicars. A prayerful posterity and people ever eminent and supreme. But prayer and work, self-help and reliance upon God must go together (*cf.* 2 Chron. xiii. xiv., xv.). Labour and pray, then in husbandry, art, and war we prevail. "Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler" (1 Chron. v. 2).

LEVI: THE REWARDS OF SERVICE.—*Verses 8-11.*

**I. Service in defence of Right.** After the defection at Sinai the sons of Levi, not in mere heat of pious zeal, but at the command of Moses and under divine direction, obeyed readily, attacked courageously, and slew idolators. They defended God's honour, supported God's cause, and punished God's enemies. "Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said who is on the Lord's side? And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him, &c.," Ex. xxxii. 26-28.

**II. Service rendered in a noble spirit.** The value of service estimated by the difficulties and the spirit in which it is given—lovingly or reluctantly. 1. *In a spirit of faithfulness.* They alone were true; all the rest broke the covenant. Holy amidst idolators; upright when multitudes bowed like reeds before the wind. "Among the faithless, faithful only he." 2. *In a spirit of impartiality.* Best friends and nearest relatives were not spared. Zeal for God prevailed over love for father and mother. This is the spirit of the Master. (Mt. xii. 48.) 3. *In a spirit of self-denial.* Levites often absent from home, engaged in constant attendance at the altar, and could not defend their families as other Israelites. They preferred fulfilment of duty to indulgence in grief at the loss of kindred, (Lev. xxi., 11, 12.), and obedience to God to natural affection.

**III. Service severely tested in its performance.** Their history had been critical and sad. 1. *Tested by the people.* "Moses and Aaron, in whom the whole tribe was proved, had grievously failed. "Massah" and "Meribah" represent the feelings of the people, and the purpose of God to try their leaders. The whole journey was a probation and a test. 2. *Tested by the enemy.* They met with hatred and opposition, "them that rise against him, and of them that hate him." Those who teach and reprove others, who uphold and preserve religion, meet with enemies. Korah and his company were envious, (Num xvi. 1); Saul rose up against the priests (1 Sam. xxii. 18) and were overcome.

**IV. Service abundantly rewarded in its results.** Levi was the holy one, the consecrated to God. He was rewarded. 1. *With official honour.* "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one." They were to retain the priesthood and be endued with knowledge and uprightness to discharge its duties. These were lost in the captivity and not restored to the second temple, but are perpetuated for ever in Him of whom Aaron was a type. 2. *With personal acceptance.* "Accept the work of his hands, ver. 11. Holy administrations done by hands and body hence fitly described. God accepted them with favour. Acceptance with God the greatest blessing to minister or people, and worthy of aim. "That we may be accepted of him," 2 Cor. v. 9. 3. *With continual prosperity.* "Bless Lord his substance," special allotments and ample provision came easily. Increased fertility of land brought increased substance. Thus the blessing of God was upon their work, and the providence of God was their inheritance. Those who depend most upon God's blessing work most faithfully in God's service, shall never be disappointed. "A sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God."

THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD.—*Verses 8, 10.*

Levi represents the head of the tribe whose crowning glory was the priesthood and possession of Thummim and Urim.

**I. Its divine allotment.** Every man a calling in which to abide, a vocation from heaven. The Christian ministry the highest and noblest, not the gift of Bishops, Presbytery or Council, but an appointment of God. "None but He who made the world can make a minister of the Gospel" says *Newton*. "The sons of Levi receive the office of the priesthood" (Heb. vii. 5.)

**II. Its necessary qualifications.** "Thy holy one" *Holy*, pure in life and character, consecrated in work, incorrupt in doctrine and consistent in all things. *Intelligent* "able to teach others," judgment to Jacob and law to Israel (ver. 10). *Truthful*, "The law of truth must be in his mouth." The true minister will resolve like the missionary Eliot to leave something of God, heaven and religion in all that he does.

**III. Its sacred duties set forth in three functions.** 1. *To teach.* "They shall teach Jacob, &c." Knowledge must be sought, possessed and communicated. "They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Exek. xlv. 23.) "The law shall not perish for the priest, nor counsel for the wise, nor the word from the prophet" (Jer. xviii. 18.) 2. *To offer incense.* "They shall put incense before thee." To offer prayers for the people, present gifts, gratitude, and praise. "He shall burn incense upon it (the golden altar) a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations" (Exek. xxx. 7, 8.) 3. *To present sacrifices.* "Whole burnt sacrifices upon thine altar." God approached by sacrifice, for men have sinned and need mercy—Christians generally "a royal priesthood" to offer up spiritual sacrifices (i. Peter ii. 5-9.)

**IV. Its distinguished success** (ver. 2.) Those who rightly serve God and instruct men will reap reward. 1. *Their work is accepted.* "Accept the work of his hands." 2. *Their character is vindicated.* Men may ridicule enthusiasm, suspect motives, and assail character. But God defends them, vindicates their conduct and society, and smites their enemies so "that they rise not again."

BENJAMIN—BELOVED AND SECURED.—*Verse 12.*

Benjamin beloved by Jacob his father (Gen. xlix. 27). In this parental love Moses sees a reflection of God's love so free and tender.

**I. By an endeared relationship.** "The beloved of the Lord." This name not an empty title, nor a description of human merit, but an expression of God's regard for holy character, genuine service and devout attachment to his cause. If we cannot be rich, we may be useful. If we do not receive honours from men, we may be dignified with the title "Sons of God."

**II. By distinguished privileges.** God's presence would overshadow, protect, and exalt them by position and influence in central government and religious worship. 1. *By special advantages.* His inheritance included Moriah, the mount on which the temple of God was built. Future generations dwelt near the oracle of God and had easy access to the ordinances of public worship. In Israel's eventful history this tribe shone with conspicuous honour. It gave birth to the first King and was the pride of the greatest apostle (cf. Rom. ii. 1; Phil. iii. 5). 2. *By divine protection.* "Shall dwell in safety by him." If the



words apply to the temple, then even Benjamin "was covered all the day long" under the security of the sanctuary (Ps. cxxv. 2) often described as a place of refuge (Ps. xxvii. 4, 5; Neh. vi. 10). God's singular comforts and constant safeguards ever towards those he loves. The welfare of his children is always the care of his heart. In weakness and danger "they dwell between his shoulders."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 6. *Live*. Learn—1. *Sin endangers life and its blessings*. Reuben's impoverished life and diminished numbers through ancestral sins (*cf.* Gen. xxxv. 22; xlix. 4). 2. *God in answer to prayer preserves forfeited blessings*. "Not die." Though deprived of the honour and privileges of firstborn, yet he retained rank, became more numerous than many other tribes (Num. i. 21; ii. 11), yet gradually sank into a nomadic tribe which had enough merely to "live and not die."

Ver. 7. *Voice*. Putting thy promises (Gen. viii. 9–11) into suit by his prayers, and pressing thee for a performance (*Trapp*). Three things were expressed—1. That the tribe of Judah, conscious of weakness, shall depend upon the Most High, and make supplication to him. 2. That God will hear such prayer. 3. That his hands shall be increased, and that he shall prevail over his enemies. This blessing has striking affinity with that which this tribe received from Jacob (Gen. xlix. 9), and both may refer to our blessed Lord, who sprang from it, who conquered our deadly foes by his death, and whose *praying* posterity ever prevail through his might (*A. Clarke*). In the verse we have a prayer—1. *For unity*. Bring him unto his people; let them be united and permanent. 2. *For strength*. "Let his hands be sufficient." No work of any kind without strong hands. "The arms of his hands were made strong by the

hands of the mighty God of Jacob.' 3. *For success*. "Be thou a help to him from his enemies." Pray and obey, for "good success have they that do his commandments" (Ps. cxi. 10).

Vers. 8, 10. *The blessing of the Christian ministry*. 1. As a medium of God's will. 2. As teachers of God's law. 3. As intercessors for God's people.

Ver. 12. *Beloved*. God's special love. 1. *Tender*—like a father carrying his child between his shoulders. 2. *Sufficient*—"cover him." 3. *Lasting*—"all the day long." *The safety of the beloved of the Lord*. Of Benjamin three things are here said which will beautifully apply to all God's people—I. He was the special object of the Divine affection, "beloved of the Lord." God especially loves his spiritual children with a love of—1. Approbation. 2. Manifestation; "He gives them love tokens and pays them love visits. 3. Distinction. II. He was to dwell near to the Lord, "by Him." All God's people are near to Him—1. By grace. 2. In providence. 3. In reference to His ordinances. 4. With regard to the prevailing impressions of the mind. III. He was to abide in perfect security. God's chosen dwell in safety from (1) the curses of the Divine law; (2) the powers of darkness; (3) the perils of life; 4. the terrors of death and the judgment day.—*Dr. Burns*.

#### JOSEPH; OR PLENTY AND POWER.—Verses 13–17.

Moses waxes eloquent and poetical at the mention of Joseph. Out of the fulness of his heart his mouth speaks. "He desires for this tribe the greatest possible abundance of earthly blessing and a vigorous manifestation of power in conflict with the nations."—(*Keil*).

**I. Exuberant fertility bestowed.** No scarcity in any department. A fertile country, a prolific seed and a balmy clime. 1. *Precious fruits of earth.* "The precious things of the earth" (ver. 16). Its trees and pasturage, and the cattle that feed upon it; for all of which Joseph's land was famous. 2. *The genial influences of heaven.* "The precious things of heaven." Its dew, sunshine and showers. "God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth and plenty of corn and wine" (Gen. xxvii. 28). 3. *Fruits in due season.* Fruits matured by light and warmth, from sun and moon. Once in a year by *the sun*, annual productions as corn, barley and grapes. Monthly productions, as grass and herbs, figs and olives, of which many crops in a year by *the moons*. 4. *Varied productions of land.* "The ancient mountains," yielded their "chief things," and "the lasting hills" their useful ores. "The deep couched beneath" in perennial fountains and flowing streams. "Blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, etc." (Gen. xlix. 25).

**II. Regal authority established:** "His horns are like the horns of unicorns," emblems of strength and royal authority. 1. *Established by aggressive power.* "With them he shall push the people together." Drive out Canaanites and overcome all opposition "to the ends of the earth." The most distant nations. 2. *Established in great security.* The stately bullock an emblem of quiet, patient strength. Its horns natural weapons of defence and security. 3. *Established in prolific numbers.* "The ten thousands of Ephraim," but "the thousands of Manasseh." "Truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations" (Gen. xlix. 19; cf. Num. i. 33-35). 4. *Established in signal honour.* Joseph "was illustrious among his brethren," separated in the sense of consecrated or distinguished. A dignity received for his affectionate conduct to his father. We may gain this honour and emulate Joseph in temper, taste and purpose.

**III. Spiritual blessings added.** "The good will of him that dwelt in the bush." To the blessings of heaven and earth spiritual mercies are desired. What is life, wealth, and earthly blessings without divine favour? God's presence better than large estates, splendid revenues, military glory, and pushing energy. "The good will" is more desirable than natural productions. God is more than His gifts. "With thee is the fountain of life."

But oh, Thou bounteous giver of all good,  
Thou art of all thy gifts Thyself the crown!  
Give what thou canst—without Thee we are poor,  
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.  
—Cowper.

ZEBULUN; OR, BUSINESS PURSUITS AND RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.—Verses 18, 19.

Commercial pursuits and sacrificial offerings are here connected. "Life is described in its two aspects of work and production, rest and recreation." "Going out" (enterprise and labour) is attributed to Zebulun, and "remaining in tents" (the comfortable enjoyment of life) to Issachar. In accordance with the delineation of their respective characters in the blessing of Jacob, this is to be attributed to the poetical parallism of the clauses, and the whole is to be understood as applying to both in the sense suggested by Graf, "Rejoice, Zebulun and Issachar, in your labour and your rest" (Keil). Learn—

**I. The providence of God in the spheres of men.** As the tribes of Israel were located in Canaan, so now men's "fortunes" are at God's disposal. "What is chance to man is the appointment of God," says one. The lot "in the lap" at the bottom of an urn determined important matters. Work was appointed,

dwelling fixed, and officers chosen. "The lot cast" at, peradventure, carrying a show of casualty (*Bp. Hall*) is under a *certain* disposal; "the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 33). 1. *In trade*, with its special tastes, skill, and success. 2. *In residence*, with its surroundings and comforts. Each man's sphere of life, and each nation's place on earth, are adapted to character under the originating cause and controlling power of God, "who hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts xvii. 26).

II. The joy springing from a right discharge of duty in these spheres. "Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out, etc." If we do our duty in that station of life in which it hath pleased God to call us, we may be happy. God's blessing can rest on commerce and agriculture. Prosperity without this may be a misery, and not a joy. Secular pursuits should develop a spirit of gladness. Profits in trade, comforts of home, and the callings of life are means of pleasure and the gifts of God. "Every man also, to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour, this is the gift of God" (Ecc. v. 19).

III. The expression of this joy in religious worship. "They shall offer sacrifices of righteousness." Ties of affinity bound these two tribes together. The same feeling, purpose, and zeal ruled in both, and displayed in the worship of God. God was acknowledged in business pursuits, and success prompted to consecration, and afforded gifts of corn, fruit, and oil to God. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, etc." (Prov. iii. 9, 10). 1. *They worshipped God themselves*. Business no excuse for neglect and staying at home. To others they set an example in liberality, praise, and energy. Their sacrifices were well-pleasing to God. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." 2. *They invited others to join them*. "They shall call the people unto the mountain." Alive themselves, they stirred up others (Zech. viii. 21). Their zeal was contagious. Their neighbours at home ("in thy tents") were not forgotten; their merchants abroad ("going out") were missionaries of God. A spirit of earnestness and personal resolve will incite others, and meet with a ready response. "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go *speedily* (go, going, implying earnestness and constancy) to pray before (entreat the face of) the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also" (Zech. viii. 21).

#### ZEBULUN AND ISSACHAR.

I. The dependence of one class of society upon another. In warfare some pray upon the mount, while others fight in the valley; in commerce some "go out" and others stay at home. Society in its various parts, pursuits, and interests is a school of mutual help. Persons most prominent and obscure, most easy and most enterprising, trades most attractive or most humble, depend upon each other. "The carpenter encourages the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smites the anvil" (Is. xli. 7).

II. The blessings of unity in benevolent enterprises. Numbers accomplish what individuals cannot. Men combine to increase resources and surmount obstacles. In the development of trade and in the propagation of truth "unity is strength." 1. *It guarantees success*. "They shall suck of the abundance of the seas." Treasures of sea and land shall be theirs. The soldier falters alone, but with comrades he advances with confidence to victory. "Two are better than one because they *have a good reward for their labour*" (Ecc. iv. 9)



2. *It creates joy.* "Rejoice" not only in success but in co-operation to secure it. Richer is the enjoyment of the common good when mutual efforts promote it. "That both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice."

III. The honour gained by those who rightly co-operate in benevolent enterprises. "They shall call the people unto the mountain." God will fix his seat on the mount in their midst; they shall invite others to worship, be honoured as missionaries to neighbours and distant nations. God will hold fellowship with them, and many shall participate in their joy and sacrificial meals; honoured in privileges, calling, and social intercourse. "Them that honour me I will honour."

#### OUTGOING AND HOME-KEEPING: A SERMON FOR SUMMER.—*Verses 18, 19.*

Issachar the fifth, and Zebulun the sixth son of Jacob and Leah. When born their mother selected their names, and gave thanks to God. In one case "God hath given me my hire; and she called his name Issachar. In the other, "God hath endued me with a good dowry; and she called his name Zebulun." These words describe the different spheres and the common duties of Zebulun and Issachar, and suggest ideas respecting ourselves suited to the season of summer.

*Zebulun.* An itinerating tribe. Their distinct habit and relative position was *going out*. Their territory to Mediterranean, with its ports as "a haven for ships." They are commemorated as first who adventured skiffs on ocean, and who acquired skill in fishing. They engaged in foreign commerce and defensive war, became mariners and merchants, deriving wealth from productions of other countries and from beings "which suck the abundance of the seas" and enriched "with treasures hid in the sand," perhaps gems, corals, and pearls from bottom of sea by diving. *Issachar.* A district entirely inland, and purely agricultural. Its soil so rich that most indolent invited to cultivate it. Its valleys covered with corn, hills rejoiced on every side, and vast plains ornamented and enriched with trees. A home-keeping tribe; like Jacob a plain man dwelling in tents, occupied with breeding cattle. Their toil rewarded them with sufficient supply for personal wants and public revenue. Loth to leave they "acquitted themselves better in the subsidy than in the muster-roll." Others went out to battle; they "abode among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks."

These different spheres and occupations find parallel in modern England, with its diversities and divisions, its population of various orders and classes. Many go out; business calls them abroad. They traverse the kingdom for purposes of commerce, and circumnavigate the globe in the interests of science. Ships incessantly sail in all seas. Exports and imports enormous. Others go out in quest of health; jaded workers needing relaxation, students in search of knowledge, adventurous men, or teeming thousands in cheap excursions. Still there are stayers at home—devotees of the dwelling—domestic hermits—so tenacious of tent that they never go anywhere. More fond of retirement than roaming, who believe that "as the bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." In choice of these different conditions and varied pursuits he sees traces of human will and Divine appointment. Inclination for each kind of life may be God's work. He predisposes some for the quietude of the hamlet and monotonous labour of the homestead; fits others for the city full of stir, for the port crowded with strangers, and for travel with its everchanging events.

Zebulun and Issachar, who occupied different spheres, *were directed to perform common duties.* Both to rejoice, call people to the mountain, and to offer sacrifices of righteousness. Zebulun to be contented and cheerful in

going out, not to repine at exposure to danger and fatigue ; but bravely encounter perils of sea, and patiently endure the bustle of port. Not permitted to envy brethren passing their lives in safety and inland position. The other tribe equal reason to rejoice and be cheerful, for their tents fixed in most fertile parts of fruitful land. Every country has its attractions to those within its boundaries. Denizens may find delight where travellers see no beauty. There is mercy in every place, and if we have an eye to see it and a heart to rejoice in it, no place will be underrated or dispraised. If not good enough, strive to make it better. Poor it may be, and we shall prove our unworthiness by leaving it worse than we found it.

Wherever we live, in town or country, near lively coasts or far inland, we should be mindful of our religious duties and acts. These duties prescribed to Zebulun and Issachar, "call the people to the mountain," the centre of general assembly and seat of religious worship. The duty of convoking people the official act of Levites, but a mutual service among people themselves. Those in retired regions must call each other out of tents, those who travelled and traded must commend worship of God to those whom they met and with whom they did business. In our day the mountain is near us. Sanctuaries open to all classes. Those who go out find them in places of sojourn ; those who stay in see them within reach from their dwellings. With mountain always accessible at home and abroad, our duty to call each other to it. We shall thus diversify homekeeping, sanctify outgoing by public exercise of religion—what these exercises are, learned from the text, "*the sacrifices of righteousness.*" Sacrifices of many kinds varying from the great propitiatory offering of Jesus once for all, to humblest presentation of joy and praise by the people he has redeemed. We are "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, &c." Our prayers and songs, preaching and teaching, gifts for God's treasury, good deeds in general and communications for special need may all become sacrifices of righteousness well pleasing to God. The work of the Lord should always be done and worship maintained. He must have an altar in our tents and an offering in our tour. Before every outgoing His presence should be asked and in return to the delights of home we should repair to the sanctuary of God. This prophecy of Moses may have suggested by same Holy Spirit the double duty enjoined by David. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord."—*Rev. W. Underwood, D.D.*

#### GAD ; LEADERSHIP, AND VALOUR.—*Verses 20–21.*

"In the blessing of Noah (Gen. ix. 26), the God of Shem is praised, so Moses praises the Lord who enlarged Gad, *i.e.*, who not only gave him broad territory in the conquered kingdom of Sihon, but furnished generally unlimited space for his development (*cf.* Gen. xxvi. 22), that he might unfold his lion-like nature in conflict with foes" (*Keil*).

**I. Wonderful enlargement of Territory.** "Enlargeth Gad." Extends the borders of his territories by Jephtha (Judg. xi. 33) and by the victories over the Hagarenes (1 Chron. v. 18–21), or delivers out of distress, which is called enlarging. Spiritually God enlarges individuals. "Thou hast enlarged (relieved me) in my distress" (Ps. iv., *cf.* Ps. xxxi. 8). He enlarges the Christian church. "The Lord hath made room (*lit.* broad space) for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (Gen. xxvi. 22).

**II. Strength in self defence.** When territories were gained they could be kept and defended. "He dwelt as a lion," couched and rested, fearless and secure ; was annoyed by surrounding tribes (Jud. xi.), but overcame them. No force could prevail against them ; they shattered "the arm," the instrument of strength, and destroyed "the head," the policy, and rule of every foe.

**III. Valour in Leadership.** When they had chosen their own lot, they helped to secure that of others. They were distinguished not for ease and selfishness, but for valour, promptitude, and energy. 1. *They fought in obedience to God's commands.* "He executed the justice of the Lord." Executed the decree to extirpate inhabitants of Canaan (*cf.* Num. xxxii.) 2. *They fought in the front ranks.* "Came with the heads of the people," the chiefs of other tribes, were leaders in the war. Many skulk behind in fear and reluctance. Be prominent and courageous in the good fight of faith. 3. *They fought bravely.* They fulfilled their promise to Moses. "We ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel until we have brought them unto their place" (Num. xxxii. 16-17). Be helpful to others and valiant through God for right. Courage is required in every war. This crowned the efforts of Joshua with success (1, 5, 8) and raised Hezekiah to unequalled eminence among the kings of Judah (2 Kings xviii. 5-7). "Be strong and of good courage."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16. *Separated.* 1. By the treatment he received from them. 2. By the providence of God which exalted and distinguished him. *Joseph, a type of Christ,* separated in personal character, in evil treatment and divine exaltation. *Good will of him that dwelt in the bush.* 1. *The Dweller in the Bush.* Not an angel, but God himself (Ex. iii. 2). Hence God's favour desired better than man's favour, fickle, uncertain, and worthless. 2. *The good will of the dweller in the bush.* Israel's condition sad, helpless and hopeless. God appears. 1. To confirm his promise. 2. To accomplish deliverance. 3. To pledge his presence. Or, 1. *A pleasing retrospect.* Moses never forgot the bush, deeply impressed and marvellously strengthened by its appearance. Past experience should teach and help. 2. *A wonderful revelation.* "Good will." Love, condescension and power to redeem. A revelation of God suited to Moses and to Israel. "A great sight." 3. *A solemn pledge.* God had not forsaken his people nor forgotten his promise. "He heard their groaning, remembered his covenant, looked upon Israel (with watchfulness and sympathetic feeling), and had respect unto them" (Ex. ii. 24-25.) "The burning bush, the persecuted church, was not consumed, because the good will of God, of which David speaks (Ps. cvi. 4), was in the bush. So it is still with His in the fiery trial, in any affliction" (Is. xliii. 1)—*Trapp.*

Ver. 17. *Glory.* A bullock was the most excellent of animals among

the Jews, not only because of its *acceptableness* to God in *sacrifice*, but because of its great *usefulness* in agriculture. There is something peculiarly noble and dignified about the ox, and his greatest ornament are his fine *horns*. These the inspired penman has in view, as the following clause proves, and it is well known that in scripture language, *horns* are the emblems of *strength, glory, and sovereignty* (Ps. lxxv., 5, 11, lxxxix., 18, 25, cxli., 9; Dan. viii. 3; Luke i. 69; Rev. xvii. 3.—*Clarke.*

*Push.* Pushing in life. In God's strength and by God's opening. No push without strength, and no opening without God. "Through Thee will we *push down* our enemies" (Ps. 44, 5.)

Ver. 18. *In thy tents.* Issachar, a powerful, sagacious tribe capable of great exertion and warlike achievements, in danger of luxuriant repose and subjection to more heroic men, because given to quiet pursuits and fat meadows. We must conquer and serve. "Be a hero in the strife." "Put on the dauntless spirit of resolution."

Ver. 21. *With the Heads.* 1. God's cause *in its nature.* Holy and more sacred than the rescue of Jerusalem from infidel Turks by Crusaders. 2. God's cause *in its requirements.* (1.) Courageous leaders. (2.) United ranks. 3. God's cause *in its rewards.* (1.) It secures the "first portion," a choice purchased by bravery. (2.) It gains the commendation and prayers of good men. "Blessed be he, &c."



## DAN ; ACTIVITY IN CONFLICT.—Verse 22.

Jacob had compared him to a serpent for subtlety, that suddenly darts at the horses' heels and throws the rider. Moses gives prominence to strength and activity. We have : 1. *The agility of youth*. "He shall leap." Springing and leaping, signs of agility. "Spring like a lion on his prey and spread consternation around him." 2. *Strength in attack*. "Dan is a lion's whelp." The tribe remarkable for strength and prowess, courage and resolution—Samson from this tribe. Strength rightly used a blessing. The more we attack sin and act for God, the more we are enabled to do. "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright." 3. *Swiftness in action*. "He shall leap." Promptitude in decision, boldness in action most needful. Leaders in war are nimble and adventurous. Joshua exercised stratagem and courage, was prompt in action and obedient to God. "O God be thou strong in our weakness that we may be ever steady in thy strength." *Bp. Hall*.

## NAPHTALI ; SATISFACTION IN DIVINE BLESSING.—Verse 23.

1. *Satisfied in acquisition of suitable territory*. "The possession of the sea and the south, i.e., an inheritance which should combine the advantages of the sea—a healthy sea breeze—with the grateful warmth of the south." *Keil*. Possess thou the west and the south. 2. *Satisfied in possession of God's favour*. If the *favour of men*; this in return for courteous and obliging conduct; as the graceful hind, zealous for liberty and kind words (Gen. xlix. 21). "Kind words never die." As a man sows will he reap. If *God's favour*, this the sublimest of all possessions. It is *sufficient*, "full with the blessing." It gives *contentment*. "*Satisfied with favour*." With this we have enough, and desire no more. This satisfies heart, conscience and intellect. God's blessing satisfies all human instincts. All misery and delusion without him. Delighting in him, all things minister to our comfort. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

"My soul which flies to thee, her trust, her treasure,  
As misers to their gold, while others rest.—*Young*.

## ASHER : FULNESS OF BLESSINGS.—Verses 24, 25.

"*Asher*, the prosperous (*cf.* Gen. xxx. 15), was justly to bear the name. He was to be a child of prosperity, blessed with earthly good; he was to enjoy rest all his life long in strong fortresses. It is evident enough that this blessing is simply an exposition of the name *Asher*, and that Moses here promises the tribe a verification of the *omen* contained in its name."—(*Keil*).

I. *Numerous offspring*. "Blessed with children," blessed among, or more than the rest of the sons. He shall have numerous, strong and healthy children. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward."

II. *Social prominence*. "Acceptable to his brethren." Not merely beloved among his brethren, but the one specially favoured and elevated by the Lord. Asher above tribal suspicion and animosity. His influence supreme and respected.

III. *Abundant prosperity*. "Let him dip his foot in oil." Oil for the face and oil for the feet; abundant and most famous. Like Job, he "washed his steps with batter (cream or thick milk), and the rock poured out rivers of oil (alongside of me wherever I went, like the refreshing stream which followed

Israel in the desert) (Job xxix. 6). God provided necessities and dainties. This rich tribe had plenty in its borders and exported to other places. "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat and he shall yield royal dainties" (Gen. xlix. 20).

**IV. Security in the enjoyment of this prosperity.** "Thy shoes iron and brass." The reference not to the feet, nor to mining, but a poetic figure for impregnable strength and defence. Their strength shall be as iron and their fortresses as brass; closed and well defended. "The mountains (barriers) were mountains of brass" (Zech. vi. 1).

**V. Strength in proportion to need.** "As thy days" last so shall thy *strength* continue. Thou shalt never diminish in number, nor decay in vigour. Thy youth shall be renewed and flourish in old age. As a tribe they should not meet with disaster, but grow stronger and stronger. It may be applied to *rest*. Constantly exposed to irruptions and pillage, God would give confidence and security. As "thy days," circumstances, vicissitudes and efforts, "so shall thy *rest* be." When faithful to God no evil can touch, no enemy overcome us. "God is my defence, I shall not be greatly moved."

#### STRENGTH EQUAL TO THE DAY.—*Verse 25.*

Many great temporal blessings promised to Asher, none like this which is superior to all others. *Strength for the day.*

**I. Natural strength as duration of the days.** Some laid by in life through infirmities and accidents, but others vigorous and strong to the last. "The back is made to meet the burden." The eye of Moses was not dim, nor his natural force abated (chap. xxxiv. 7). Caleb at four-score and five was as strong and ready for war as in the day Moses sent him to view the land (Josh. xiv. 10, 11). "Fat and flourishing in old age to show that the Lord is upright."

**II. Varied strength as the character of the days.** Days vary in complexion. Days of light and darkness, of duty and warfare. Present days, the age in which we live, with its philanthropies, enterprises and missionary ardour. Future days, whatever they may be or bring. "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

**III. Spiritual strength as long as days and duties last.** The strength of the *sufferer* to bear "the ills of life" in patience and submission to God; of the *speaker* to restrain and to put forth his energy; of the *soldier* for aggressive and courageous warfare, for complete and constant victory. We need strength to sit still in this restless and feverish day; strength to obey when commanded to act. Strength as the condition of rest and the success of work. "All your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Let me but hear my Saviour say,  
Strength shall be equal to thy day;  
Then I rejoice in deep distress,  
Leaning on all sufficient grace.

#### STRENGTH ACCORDING TO THE DAYS.—*Verse 25.*

**I.** It is not the design of these words to suppress forelooking and foreplanning in secular things. **II.** Nor are they designed to teach men that God will maintain a providence of miracles on their behalf. **III.** They teach us that we cannot know beforehand what help will spring up from our circumstances. **IV.** They also teach us that anxiety for the future is labour lost. Apply the

subject to those who—(1) Follow conscience against their interests. (2) Wish to reform from evil habits, but fear they will not be able to hold out. (3) Look wistfully on a Christian life, but doubt if they would be able to maintain it. (4) Are exceedingly troubled in regard to expected events. (5) Are troubled about relative afflictions. (6) Are troubled about their own death.—*H. W. Beecher.*

### THE MAJESTY OF ISRAEL'S GOD.—*Verses 26-29.*

Conclusion of blessings corresponds with introduction. The kingdom was founded in Jehovah the salvation of his people. So in conclusion Jehovah is their eternal refuge, and they are blessed in Him. These probably the last words Moses wrote. The next chapter added by another writer. God's majesty and power set forth in splendid imagery.

**I. Inimitable in his perfections.** Not like the vanities of nations; if real, they cannot be compared with the Almighty. 1. *Eternal in existence.* "The eternal God"—not of yesterday; before time, before all worlds; ever *was, is,* and *will be* the same unchangeable, wise and holy being, "the everlasting God." 2. *Unequalled in majesty.* "None like unto the God of Jeshurun." "Every nation boasted of its God, but none had such a God to boast of as Israel had." "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

**II. Powerful in His protection.** "Thy refuge." 1. *Arms to sustain.* "Underneath are the everlasting arms"—arms which never relax their embrace, never get weary and strong as omnipotence, bearing up, carrying and keeping from falling the weakest child that trusts them. 2. *Strength to overcome.* "He shall thrust out the enemy." God drove out the heathen to plant them (Ps. xc. 1). He will dislodge our enemies, open up the way, conquer principalities and powers, and put us in possession of heaven. 3. *Confidence in security.* "Israel then shall dwell in safety." When planted by God, he is a strong tower and protection, without earthly bulwarks, alliances, and resources; even in opposition and danger God gives confidence and security. "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks" (Is. xxxiii. 16).

**III. Constant in oversight.** God never forgets, nor forsakes. No people so well provided for as Israel. 1. *Abundant provision.* "The fountain of Jacob" overflows in streams of mercies and never dries. 2. *Useful provision.* Corn, wine, and oil to sustain and refresh; the products of earth, "wheat and barley, vines and fig-trees," and the blessings of heaven, everything needful and substantial, "God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth." 3. *Constant provision.* "The heavens shall drop down dew." The early and latter rain and fruits in season; no stint, no scarcity. "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure" (Is. xxxiii. 16).

**IV. Merciful in deliverance.** "A people saved by the Lord." Rescued from Egypt, preserved in the desert, and ever kept from harm. This not by Israel's sword nor Israel's skill, but their salvation bought and defended by Jehovah. If we take the glory of national deliverances, admire and applaud the courage that gained them and the wisdom that planned them, our right hand will become palsied, and victory may be followed by shameful defeat. "O Israel, trust thou in the Lord, he is their help and their shield."



**V. Victorious in contest.** When God undertakes, no one can contend with him; this adds madness to folly. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" 1. *Victory is easy.* "Thine enemies found liars" who predicted failure. 2. *Victory is complete.* "Thou shalt tread upon," subdue all opposition; assail "their high places" and level them to the dust. Satan to be trod upon shortly, death and the powers of hell subdued. Free, complete, everlasting victory. "Salvation is of the Lord."

#### THE HAPPINESS OF ISRAEL IN GOD.—Verse 29.

God is "blessed for ever" and the source of blessing to his people. He derives no happiness from them but imparts it to them. "Happy art thou, O Israel."

**I. Happy in the presence of God.** Who is their home, refuge and dwelling place. Man wants rest and blessedness, a centre of unity, a perfect home. These only found in God. Earthly home, a mere shadow, a type of eternal home. In seeking this home, God is with his people. "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest."

**II. Happy in the salvation of God.** "O people saved by the Lord." Israel's deliverance a type of salvation in Christ—Christians like ancient Israel, a people separated, saved and exalted. "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name and to triumph in thy praise."

**III. Happy in the protection of God.** "The eternal God is thy refuge." He was the shield of their help—Israel "dwelt safely alone" among enemies. Without treaties and alliances with other nations. God protects—(1) *In defensive War*, "their shield," which nothing can pierce or turn aside. "With favour wilt thou compass (crown) him as with a shield" (Ps. v. 12.) (2) *In offensive War*, "their sword." To slay their foes, ensure their progress and gain them eminence. "The sword of thy excellency."

**IV. Happy in the triumph of God.** God's wonders were terrible in reality and report. 1. *Fear put the enemy to flight.* "The terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob" (Gen. xxxv. 5; cf. Ex. xxiii. 27; Deut. ii. 25; xi. 25). 2. *Fortifications were no defence.* God, higher than the loftiest bulwark, "rideth upon the heaven" in splendour, power, and supremacy. Is this God your God? Then His heavenly favour, protection, and triumph, are yours. "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 23. *Satisfied.* 1. Men *thirst*, are not happy, dissatisfied. 2. God's favour alone can satisfy, things seen and heard give no permanent enjoyment, Ecc. i. 8. "Our own will, although it should obtain its largest wish, would always keep us in uneasiness" (*Pascal*). "Satisfied with favour." He that cometh to me shall

never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Ver. 26. *Rideth to help.* 1. The *source* of help. "Heaven." 2. The *swiftness* of help. Riding as one on horse, coming with irresistible might. 3. The *majesty* of help. Rides in state and splendour, in magnificence

of clouds and awful grandeur. 4. The *variety* of help. Heaven and earth united, thunder and lightning, hail-stones and artillery, "excellency on the sky." "Having the celestial creatures for his cavalry, and the terrestrial for his infantry; how then can *his* want help" (*Trapp*). 5. The *sufficiency* of help. "None like him" in power and disposition.

Ver. 27. *The eternal God*, Heb., the God of antiquity, that "ancient of days," that "Rock of Ages," "who is before all things, and by whom all things consist" (Col. i. 17), "who is the first and the last, and besides whom there is no God" (Is. xlv. 6) *Trapp*. *Thy Refuge, God the home of the soul*. 1. Man a homeless creature. A wanderer in the wilderness, seeking habitation and rest. 2. God a home, for shelter, provision, and rest. "Our *dwelling place* in all generations." *Everlasting arms*. 1. Long enough to embrace eternity. 2. Strong enough never to get weary. 3. Ready enough to embrace any that come. 4. Yet "stretched out" in patience, perseverance and love, to "disobedient," rebellious "children," "all day long," Rom. x. 21. What a tender, compassionate attitude of God towards sinners! The glory of God's forbearance a bitter ingredient of misery at last. The words a description of God's power also. Power to lift up the lowest and most degraded, to protect and shelter the weakest and most timid. "As the arm is the emblem of *power*, and of power in a state of *exertion*, the words here state

that an unlimited and unconquerable power shall be eternally exerted in the defence of God's *church*, and in the behalf of all those who trust in him." *A. Clarke*.

*Destroy them*. 1. The *duty*. "*Destroy them*," spare no sin, no enemy. Not merely maim, utterly irradicate them and leave nothing undone. 2. The *strength to perform it*. "He shall thrust out, &c." God goes before in providence, accompanies in person and equips for success.

Ver. 29. *Happy*. 1. God's people happy in this life. Trusting in God they have contentment, hope and security. All things work together for their good, a real, solid, happiness, not momentary joy or feverish excitement. "*Happy art thou, O Israel*." 2. Happy in death. Guilt and fear taken away, death and hell conquered. "The end is peace." "The battle is fought," said Dr. Payson, "and the victory is won for ever, I am going to bathe in an ocean of purity, and benevolence, and happiness to all eternity." 3. Happy in the world to come. Heaven a place of peace and felicity. No discord nor disorder there. A realization of Howe's conception, "the blessedness of the righteous," and Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest."

Man's sickly soul, though turned and toss'd  
for ever

From side to side, can rest on nought but thee;  
Here, in full trust; hereafter, in full joy.  
On thee, the promised, sure eternal down  
Of spirits, toil'd in travel through this vale. —

*Young*.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 2. *Shined*. Contemplate the exalted attributes of Deity; the displays of His glory; the splendours of His throne; the amplitudes of His dominions; the angelic orders of His kingdom; the richness of His gifts, and the untouched ocean of happiness yet in reserve for His people (*J. Wilson*). *Saints*. The interest felt by the angels in all that concerns the Gospel and the

eternal interests of men put on their probation, form a very humbling contrast to our cold indifference.—*Adams*.

Ver. 4. *Law*. A law is valuable, not because it is law, but because there is right in it; and because of this rightness it is like a vessel carrying perfume; like the alabaster enclosure of a lamp.—*Beecher*.

Ver. 6. *Live.* Every man's life lies within the present, for the past is spent and done with, and the future is uncertain.—*Antonius.*

Vers. 9–11. *Observed Thy word—*

How fond it were to wish for such a King,  
And no obedience to His sceptre bring,  
Whose yoke is easy, and His burthen light;  
His service freedom, and His judgments right.  
—*Waller.*

Ver. 12. *Beloved of the Lord.* Two gentlemen were once riding together, and as they were about to separate, one said to the other, "Do you ever read your Bible?" "Yes; but I get no benefit from it, because, to tell the truth, I do not feel that I love God." "Neither did I," replied the other, "but God loved me." This answer produced such an effect upon his friend that he said, "It was as if one had lifted him off the saddle into the skies." It opened up to his soul at once the great truth, that it is not how much I love God, but how much God loves me.

Vers. 18, 19. *Going out.* Trades exemplify dependence and mutual help. Precisely because no man can reach perfection in all the arts, and be a proficient in every profession, the progress of civilization requires the division of labour; not division in the sense of hostility, but a division of works with a common will—many departments with one interest, "diversities of operation with the same spirit." Not more completely does the wheel of the engine depend upon the boiler, or the rod upon the valve, than one individual upon another in the more intricate and wondrous mechanism of society.

Heaven forming each on other to depend,  
A master, or a servant, or a friend,  
Bids each on other for assistance call,  
Till one man's weakness grows the strength  
of all. —*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

Ver. 20. *Lion.* Wonderful is the case of boldness in civil business. What first? Boldness. What second and third? Boldness.—*Bacon.*

Ver. 23. *Satisfied with favour.* "My soul hath found inexpressibly," said John Brown, of Haddington, "more sweetness and satisfaction in two words such as these—*thy God* and *my God*—than all the pleasures found in the things since the creation could equal."

Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,  
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.  
—*Cowper.*

Ver. 25. *Strength.* Dr. Doddridge was one day talking, much depressed, his very heart desolate within him; but, says he, passing a cottage door open, I happened at the moment to hear a child reading, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The effect on my mind was indescribable. It was like life from the dead.—*Jay.*

Ver. 27. *Thrust out.*

Rouse to some work of high and holy love,  
And thou an angel's happiness shall know.

Ver. 28. *Shield.* If heaven and earth shake God hath ordained and secured that his children shall be protected as they need and when they need. When the enemy is most strongly assaulting, at the last extremity, when every other refuge shall have been swept away.—*Bridges.* Creature extremity can never reach beyond the help of Omnipotence.

Ver. 29. *Happy art thou, O Israel.*

O Israel, blest beyond compare;  
Unrivalled all thy glories are.  
Jehovah deigns to fill thy throne,  
And calls thine interest His own.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—This chapter, written after death of Moses, once formed an introduction to book of Joshua.

1-4. Moses ascends Nebo. Pisgah height, of which Nebo a peak; from which extensive prospect of land east of Jordan to Dan. Not Laish-Dan (Judges xviii. 27) which was not in Gilead.



Probably a town in north of Peræa. Utmost sea, Mediterranean, beyond which no land. Zoar, southern extremity of Dead sea (cf. Gen., xix. 22). See, really with the naked eyes miraculously strengthened.

5-6. **Death and Burial of Moses.** Word, *lit.* at the mouth of the Lord. "The sense clear from Gen. xlv. 21. Vulg. correctly "*jubente Domino*." It denotes that Moses died, not because his vital powers were exhausted, but at the sentence of God, and as a punishment for his sin, cf. xxxii. 51.—(*Speak. Com.*) **Buried.** God buried him, an honour perhaps designed to sustain the authority of Moses, which might have been impaired through punishment. **Sepulchre.** Not merely lest he should become an object of superstitious honour, for Jews not prone to this particular form of error. But, bearing in mind the appearance at Transfiguration (Mat. xvii. 1-10) and what is said by Luke v. 9, we may conjecture that Moses after death passed into same state with Enoch and Elijah; and that his sepulchre could not be found, because shortly translated from it (*Speak. Com.*)

10-12. **The character of Moses.** Joshua filled with the *spirit* (ver. 9) of practical wisdom in manifold action (Is. xi. 2); but not like Moses, gifted with power to work signs and miracles, to found a kingdom and create a nation. None equalled him (except Jesus) in official dignity, holy character and intimate friendship with God. *Knew* God freely and familiarly conversed with him. This made him eminent above all prophets (cf. Num. xii. 8).

### UNREALISED VISIONS.—*Verses 1-8.*

The great parable of the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness has one of its profoundest applications in the death of the two great leaders, Moses and Aaron. Men above all others entitled to enter the land of promise; neither falling in battle nor dying a natural death, both doomed to die by the sentence of Jehovah whom they served, and under whom they were leading the people. This startles into a recognition of the tragedy of life and the impress of reality. Aaron, the high priest of God, though infirm, a noble and saintly man; in character and service second only to his brother, led by Moses and his son out of the midst of the wondering, weeping people to die in priestly robes, on the lonely summit of the Mount in Edom. Moses must die on Nebo, but die alone; neither son nor brother to close his dying eyes or receive his last words. Yet in its romantic incidents and tragic crisis, his death a fitting close of his great heroic life. The command to climb Nebo and die after such a vision, seems a penal infliction wantonly aggravated. Imagination can scarcely enhance the mystery and the awe, terrible in deliberateness and conditions. Only sublimest faith could implicitly obey such a mandate. It is a twofold parable. *First, of the unrealised hope of human life.* 1. The unrealised hopes of human life; the frequent disappointments, the unfulfilled purposes which so often characterise it; and which, to the affections and the philosophy of life, are so mysterious and painful. Every life a pilgrimage seeking its goal in some Canaan of rest. We picture it, struggle for it and sometimes on verge of realizing it. We "see it with our eyes;" but in mysterious providence of life, forbidden "to go over." "Our purposes are broken off," we are disappointed, and resent if faith prevent not. Mark conditions under which Moses died. (1) While as yet his physical strength was undiminished, "His eye not dim," etc. (2) While as yet there seemed a great work for him to do, Jordan to cross, Jericho to conquer, Canaanites to drive out, etc. (3) He died just when bright prospects filled his eye, when all the hope of his life was about to be fulfilled. What explains this mystery or justifies the ways of God to man? Cannot always judge, but learn:

Success is not the chief nobility of life. 2. The chief blessedness of life is capability of service. 3. It is a blessed thing to die when the work has been so far done that it justifies the worker, demonstrates his character, vindicates his nobleness; so that he is not ashamed to leave it for completion; so that his friends are proud of its unfinished fragments. This not always given, but the faithful servants accepts the conditions. 4. The formal denial of our hopes may be the means of perfecting our character. 5. If in our service we have

sinned against right methods and tempers of service, sinned against Him whom we serve, it is well that his disapproval of our sin should be manifest. 6. The prohibition comes with gracious mitigations. The sting of death extracted. (1) What greater grace wrought in a man than acquiescence in such a mandate. (2) Moses is permitted to prepare for departure. (3) He is permitted to see his successor. 7. God honours his faithful servant by Himself preparing his sepulchre. 8. God fulfilled His promises and the hopes of his servant in a deeper and higher way than he anticipated.

*Second, of the visions which may inspire human life*, its unrealised hopes notwithstanding. To men who live greatly God gives visions through this very idealism of life, which are glorious inspiration and strength; visions of a great faith and a bright hope; of rest through the toil, of triumph while they fight, of heavenly perfection and blessedness. Many glorious visions had been given to Moses. Who knows but to the lofty soul of this man of God, Canaan would have been a disenchantment. Many of our realised hopes are. In the better country no shortcoming, no disappointment. Canaan may suffice for a suggestive prophecy; only God's heaven can be a satisfactory fulfilment. A great thing for faith to climb and stand on heights to survey the heritage of God. And the nearer Jordan, the more glorious the prospect. The goodly land is revealed. All earthly lights pale before the great glory, all things here seem little and unimportant in that great blessedness. "The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared, etc." Thus Moses disappears from sight and God buries him. One more glimpse of him vouchsafed on "the Holy Mount." The prayer, "show me thy glory," was finally answered. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory." "Such honour have all the saints."—*Dr. Allon's Vision of God.*

#### THE BURIAL OF MOSES—ITS LESSONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Strange and singular that the greatest of all Old Testament prophets should find a resting place in the earth and no man able to point it out. Sepulchres of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob among the groves of Hebron, Joseph's bones rest in Shechem, sepulchre of David by Jerusalem, the home of his heart. Neglect of the people did not leave the spot unmarked. Not what a Jew wished or what popular history would have framed, this death and burial, fitted to be a source of fruitful reflection.

I. God will have no one, living or dead, to stand between His creatures and Himself. II. God wishes men to see something more left of His servants than the outward shrine. III. God takes the honour of His servants into His own keeping. IV. God would teach men that He has a relation to His servants which extends beyond their death. V. God would teach men from the very first that His regard is not confined to any chosen soil. VI. There is one concluding lesson which has been reserved for us in its fulness, and which could be seen only partially by the Jews—that *the seeming failure in a true life may have at least a complete compensation*. Under the gospel this view clear. As God forgave the sin we see that long since he made up the loss. This a comfort to many who feel immeasurably distant from Moses, as if our nature were all broken by failure and flaw. A true purpose in life shall reach a perfect close one day, its shortcomings completed, its errors rectified, its visions realised. One greater than Moses ended life in what appeared utter failure, with His followers scattered, His mission rejected and He Himself betrayed to a death of agony and shame. But He cried, "It is finished," achieved success and secured it for all who take up the cross and follow Him. There is full compensation for failure in every true life, and the highest where struggle and loss have been

deepest. Most comforting of all these is reversal of consequences of sin in contrition and faith. The shadow on earth's dial-plate is turned back when eternal life is gained and the sun no more goes down. Like Moses we shall rise to have heart's desire, to look on the land and on Him who is the glory of it.

Rev. John Ker.

### THE DEATH OF MOSES.

I. The greatest of men are but instruments in God's hands, and He can afford to lay them aside when He chooses. Moses seemed indispensable. None of similar ability and character to carry on work, yet God determined to move him. Paul, Luther, Wesley, and great reformers removed, yet truth survives, progresses and triumphs. 1. Let this dispel fears for future of the Church of God. 2. Abate personal pride, and—3. Calm our fears for loved ones. "God, the husband of the widow," etc. II. The time and the manner of each man's removal from earth are fixed by God. III. When God removes His servants from earth, it is that He may take them to Heaven. IV. Until God calls us away, let us be diligent in doing good. V. God frequently gives intimation that He is about to call them to Himself. VI. God will remove all difficulties away in our heavenward journey. Adapted from Vol. II. *Preachers' Monthly*.

"In His bless'd life,  
I see the path, and, in His death, the price,  
And in His great ascent, the proof supreme  
Of immortality."—*Young*.

### THE CHARMING PROSPECT.—*Verses 1-4.*

"The plains of Moab," the last station before entrance to Canaan (Num. xxxiii. 48). The prospect from Pisgah, charming in beauty and extent. About 160 miles in length and 50 or 60 in breadth. We borrow many of the following hints from an American *Sunday School Journal*.

I. The method of discerning it. He glanced *before*, not below him. In clear atmosphere, he saw verdure, sunshine and "the glory of all lands." How? 1. *With the naked eye*. "His eye not dim." Beauty everywhere if only an eye to see. An artist's eye; a poet's eye. Culture and communion with God help to discern and appreciate landscapes. 2. *With the help of God*. "The Lord showed him." Indicated direction, gave supernatural strength to follow it. The eye and the object from God. To him are we indebted for a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Natural and spiritual vision, "the hearing ear and the seeing eye the Lord hath made."

II. The summit from which it was viewed. Moses went up from the plains to the mount. Clouds and conflict below. We must rise higher and higher for rest, intercourse with God and heaven. The celestial city viewed from the delectable mountains. On the Mount of Transfiguration we see the glory of Christ. From Pisgah we discern Canaan. "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

III. The hopes which were realised by it. Moses had written of places which he had never seen. Memory would sweeten this prospect. 1. *The land was secured to the people*. Promised and were about to possess it. 2. *"He was reaping the recompense of reward."* Not overwhelmed with grief, because excluded from earthly inheritance. "He desired a better country, that is a



heavenly." He saw the type, but taken up to the reality. "In the death of a good man eternity is seen looking through time."—*Goethe*. When we see the salvation of God we may pray, "Lord now let thy servant depart in peace."

### THE SLEEPING SAINT.—*Verses 5-7.*

"Moses, the servant of the Lord, died," and rests from his labours.

**I. Moses died by command of God.** But his change more like sleep than death. Lazarus slept. Believers "fall asleep in Christ." God put him to rest as you gently lay a child to sleep. "The Jewish doctors so expound this text, as though God did indeed take away his soul with a kiss (the loving mother is seen to kiss the child and then lay it down to sleep); and so of their 903 kinds of death, this they say is the easiest. God bade Moses go lie down and sleep (Deut. xxxi. 16), and he accordingly went to bed when his Father bade"—*Trapp*. "Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers."

**II. Moses was buried by the hand of God.** God himself, or Michael at command of God "buried him." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." He cares for soul and body. "No man knoweth of His sepulchre unto this day." We shall not speculate or discuss about it. "The grave is not deep; it is the shining tread of an angel that seeks us."—*Richter*.

O, lonely tomb in Moab's land !  
O dark Bethpeor's hill !  
Speak to these anxious hearts of ours  
And teach them to be still.  
God hath his mysteries of grace,  
Ways that we cannot tell ;  
He hides them deep like the sacred sleep  
Of him he loved so well.

—*D. M. Moir.*

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Moses went up. Climbing mountains.* An address for children.

1. It is itself a picture: the old, clear-visioned, vigorous man, climbing the rugged and lofty mountains east of Canaan. His life a series of historical pictures the most impressive and instructive. The lesson is a picture of Canaan the most beautiful. 2. Climbing mountains! What boy or girl will not be interested in that? 3. The thoughts that may have entered Moses' mind as he looked out on hills, plains, valleys, and river below, and the sea beyond!

*Moses a Man of Mountains.*

1. Mountain of conflict (Ex. xvii. 10).  
2. Of the law (Ex. xix. 20). 3. Of communion with God (Ex. xxiv. 15-18).  
4. Of bereavement (Num. xx. 23-29).  
5. Of vision and of death (Deut.

xxxiv. 6). 6. Of transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 7). Mount Zion (Heb. xii. 22-24).  
—*S. S. Journal*.

*Went up.* 1. A good man's life an ascent. At God's command, and by God's help, in knowledge, strength, and meetness for heaven. 2. A good man's death an ascent. May be in the valley, but guided through and lifted up. "God ordered that Aaron and Moses should go up to the tops of mountains to die," says J. Edwards, "to signify that the death of a godly man is but an entrance into a heavenly state." "Death is to the good an ascension."

Ver. 4. *The Lord showed him.* God gave Moses that day (1) a lesson in *eye-teaching*. 2. A lesson in *geography*. 3. A lesson in *prophecy*—tribes not yet

located. God showed him where He would locate them. 4. A lesson in *history*. "I swore unto Abraham," etc. v. 4.—*S. S. Journal*.

a chastisement—a public visitation for sin in the eye of all the hosts of Israel—yet in some respect an honourable one.—*Dr. Cumming*.

Vers. 5, 6. "*Moses died according to the word of the Lord.*" What occurred in this case, occurs in that of every Christian. All three—time, place, and manner—are fixed in the word of the Lord. Here a higher power interposes and disposes of man's existence upon earth. The death of Moses was *solemn, sudden*, and though

*Thoughts on the death of Moses.*

I. The best must die: "the servant of the Lord." II. The best may die in the zenith of their greatness. III. The best may die when apparently indispensable. IV. The best may die where they little expect. V. But all die when and where God decrees.—*R. A. Griffin*.

#### A WEEPING PEOPLE.—Verse 8.

Seven days the usual time of mourning, for persons of rank and eminence, thirty (Gen. l. 3, 10; Num. xx. 29). Moses absent when he died, was not carried in public procession, hence bitter mourning (see *Josephus Ant.* Bk. iv. chap. viii., sect. 48). I. Bereaved by a mysterious event. Families robbed of heads, Christian churches of best workers, nations of leaders. We lose their counsels, influence and prayers, "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." We cry at the departure of every leader, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men." II. Punished for strange ingratitude. Israel often complained and rebelled against Moses, did not treat him kindly. Now missed, and murmurers are mourners. "It is infamy to die and not be missed."—(*Wilcox*). III. Taught by a wise providence. The justice, truth and firmness of God must be known (Deut. xxxii. 49–52). They must be taught that God depends not upon any of his creatures, and that the best, most holy and most useful must die. "The fathers where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever!"

When some men die, a nation feels;  
When others fall, the world is moved.

#### A WORTHY SUCCESSOR.—Verse 9.

Anxiety of parents to be succeeded in business and profession by children, of noblemen by heirs, of monarchs by princes. Joshua a worthy successor.

I. He was introduced by Moses. "Moses had laid his hands upon him," and thus designated the person and conferred the power (Num. xxvii. 18, 23). No breaks, no vacancies in God's service. One goes, another comes; one finishes what another leaves incomplete. A leader succeeds a lawgiver. "The law," says Bp. Wordsworth, "led men to see the promises afar off, and to embrace them (rather to see and greet the promises from afar, Heb. xi. 13), and it brought them to the borders of Canaan, but could not bring them into it; that was reserved for Joshua, the type of Jesus."

II. He was qualified by special endowments. "Full of the spirit of wisdom." Intimacy with Moses and training under his care not enough. He had faith (Num. xiv. 6–9), and experience (Ex. xvii. 8–13); but required Divine gifts and graces to fit him to govern. The disciples had been with Jesus, but not equipped until the spirit given. Friendship and education, patronage and office, were shreds of honour. "The Spirit needed" as a spirit of wisdom, counsel, and might (Is. ii. 2).

**III. He was successful in his work.** "The children of Israel hearkened unto him," etc. Gifted men admired. The presence and authority of God with His servants will secure the affection and obedience of the people. Joshua owned as leader and prosperous in undertaking. By strength of character, and superlative wisdom, men rise to honour and success; wield an influence after death, and become saviours and kings in society. "On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life" (Jos. iv. 14; iii. 7; i. 5).

#### THE INFLUENCE OF A HOLY LIFE.—Verses 10-12.

Moses here commended for character official position and privilege. Unique in greatness and honour. "There arose not a prophet," etc.

**I. The source from which the influence came.** Fellowship with God, "whom the Lord knew," conversed with "face to face" (Num. xii. 8). Intercourse with God gives power with man. None great and successful without this (Jacob, Joshua, Daniel and Luther). Retirement most requisite, most seasonable in our pressing and incessant duties. Moses in Midian (Ex. ii. 15; iii. 1); John the Baptist in the desert (Luke i. 30); Jesus in Nazareth (Matt. ii. 23). "Learn to live alone," said Dr. Paley, when recommending to the younger clergy, communion with God. "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place."

**II. The method by which the influence was acquired.** "The Lord sent" him and he went "in the land of Egypt" to deliver the people. Obedient to God he was endowed with the power of God. Entire consecration of time and talents brings its reward. In the words of the apostle, we have the influence of devout life upon ministerial success. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts vi. 4). "The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."

**III. The ages through which the influence lasted.** None like Moses in the days of Israel, and after intervening centuries he was still considered "Mighty in words and deeds" (Acts vii. 22). The power of such a life not destroyed by one failure. Memory survives death, and deeds never pass into oblivion and the tomb. Myriads crowd the lower walks of life, removed and no more missed than atoms from the base of a lofty pyramid. But men conspicuous for virtues and holy deeds will live in name and influence and act upon the race till the end of time. "The righteous had in everlasting remembrance."

"To hew his name out upon time  
As on a rock; there in immortality  
To stand on time as on a pedestal."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 9. *Joshua chosen.* All spiritual endowments from the Holy Ghost. The spirit of wisdom, courage and the fear of God specially needed for well-qualified leaders of men. Admire the goodness of God in raising up such men. If one burning and shining light is extinguished "the Father of lights" can kindle another.

Vers. 10-12. *Not a prophet like Moses.* Unequalled. 1. In rank. 2. In faithfulness to duty (Num. xii. 7; Heb. iii. 1-6). 3. In legislative wisdom and 4. In divine authority, displayed (*a.*) in signs to the enemy (*b.*) in terror to Israel. Moses was warrior, statesman, poet, philosopher, hero and saint. No man has rivalled him, nor robbed



him of his honour. "A prophet who stood by himself in his greatness in relation to men and to God. To be the leader of a nation in such peculiar circumstances for 40 years was in itself a position without a parallel; but to have led them out of Egypt against the will of their enslavers, to have

been at their head during a whole generation of which every day witnessed a stupendous miracle, to have been the founder of their laws and their religion, was a work such as far outshone the deeds of any one man from the beginning of history, and such as still remains unique."—*Blunt*.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXIV.

Vers. 1-4. *Showed*. "My work is done; I have nothing to do but to go to my Father;" said the Countess of Huntingdon. "I am on the bright side of seventy—bright side, because nearer to the everlasting glory." *Top of Pisgah*. The loneliness of death. Ordinarily when men die, there are friends to gather round their bed, with tender ministries of love and prayer. Sometimes in the case of men like Moses, a nation will hush its footsteps and wait the issue with agonising suspense. Shut us up to die alone, with no hand that our weakness may clasp, no tear that may soothe our love, no prayer that may wing our hope, and how appalling death becomes. What pathos there is in the shrinking wail of Pascal—"I shall die alone!"—*Dr. Allon*.

*Went up*. What a contrast to a former Divine summons, to ascend Sinai to commune with Jehovah, to receive from Him comfort and strength and a renewed commission of service! Yet he evinces none of the trembling

awe with which he ascended Sinai. Without remonstrance, without hesitancy save for a moment, he calmly obeys the stern injunction. "A good man knows how to die" (*Dr. Allon*). "Death cannot come to him untimely who is fit to die" (*Milman*).

Climb the ascent of being  
And approach for ever nearer to the life divine.

Ver. 5. *The servant of the Lord died*. A man of God has fallen to-day.

Ver. 8. *Weeping*. When Augustus died the Romans wished that either he had never been born or had never died.

Ver. 10. *Not a prophet since*. Moses was one that exceeded all men that ever were in understanding, and made the best use of what that understanding suggested to him.—*Josephus*.

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime, etc.

THE END.









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